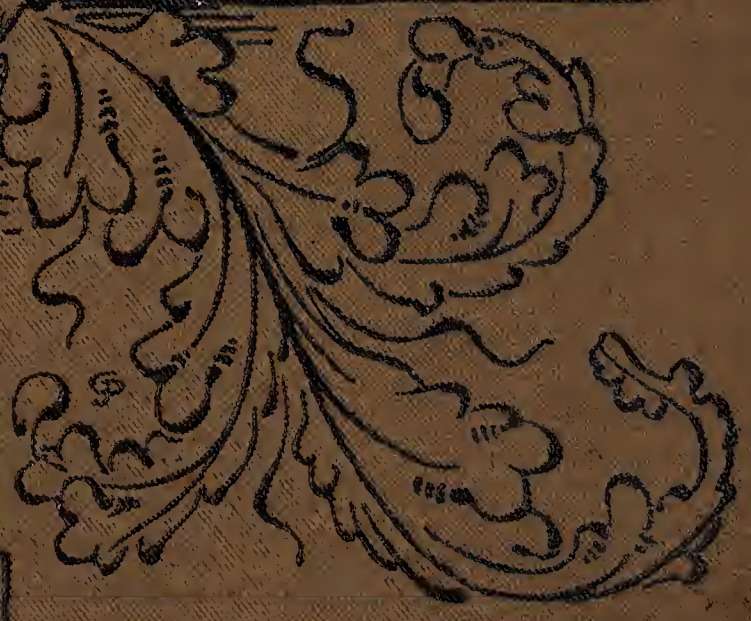


WIDE BREADTH OF ESCAPES OF Major Mendenax BY F. BLAKE CROFTON



FOR BOYS





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THE DISAPPOINTED WOLVES—IN ROYAL LUCK.
(See page 15.)

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HAIRBREADTH ESCAPES

OF

MAJOR MENDAX.

BY

FRANCIS BLAKE CROFTON.

HIS PERILOUS ENCOUNTERS, STARTLING ADVENTURES, AND DARING EXPLOITS
WITH INDIANS, CANNIBALS, WILD BEASTS, SERPENTS, BALLOONS, GEY-
SERS, ETC., ETC., ALL OVER THE WORLD, IN THE BOWELS
OF THE EARTH AND ABOVE THE CLOUDS.

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE.

(THE BOOK FOR BOYS.)

WITH SPIRITED ILLUSTRATIONS BY BENNETT.

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HUBBARD BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
PHILADELPHIA.

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HAIRBREADTH ESCAPES OF MAJOR MENDAX.

I.

IN SUSPENSE.

“IT is hard to believe,” said Bill, looking up from his “Travels in Iceland,” “that a hot spring can be teased into spouting before its regular time by throwing in big stones or pieces of turf. Is it true, uncle, what this book says of the Strokkur Geyser?”

I cannot vouch,” said the Major, “for another traveler’s tale. But it happens that I am able to answer at least for the *possibility* of that particular phenomenon, which, by the way, I have never heard doubted before.

A pack of wolves once pursued me out in Dakota. They were gaunt and hungry, as the wolves that chase travelers commonly are. I shot one of the sleigh horses and cut the traces, as travelers in such circumstances commonly do. Then I shot the other also. The sleigh stopped. In my excitement I had overlooked the likelihood of this. A dim hope, that my gift of a horse more than they could have expected me to give might make me popular among the wolves, soon died out. I found myself really as much mistaken as the obnoxious Irish landlord who fancied he might prudently venture

back among the tenantry again, when they had bagged the second younger brother whom he had left behind to act (and be acted upon) in his stead.

The ungrateful wolves rushed on me from every side, their jaws snapping like steel traps. Firing my revolver promiscuously, I made for a queer looking hole that I saw close by. Narrow passes, I knew, had sometimes been made good against incredible numbers. I thought of Thermopylæ, and resolved at any rate to die game. If I did get into the hole in a decided hurry it was the hurry of a soldier eager to anticipate the enemy in occupying an important strategic point.

Down I fell perpendicularly—how many yards I cannot guess—until the passage became rounder and narrower, enabling me to catch a rocky ledge on either side with my hands and to plant my feet in a little crevice below. Thus firmly braced, I acted as a prop to a number of wolves that were forced into the chasm by the pressure of their companions on the surface of the prairie. The two next to me had caught each other in the dark and locked their jaws, fortunately for me. Still I did not exactly view them as agreeable neighbors; so I withdrew my right hand from the ledge it rested on, and shrank beneath the left hand ledge, which was the broader of the two.

Their prop thus removed, the wolves fell down, one by one and two by two, until I could see daylight above me. They struggled hard to stop themselves, and I could hear their hopeless howls far underneath, mingled with the plashing of water.

This latter sound, which apparently commenced after the first wolf had fallen past me, grew louder and louder every moment. I reached my right hand out and grasped the opposite ledge, and peered down into the abyss to see what was the matter. In a moment I was struck by a rising stream of hot water and shot up to the open air, high above the mouth of the chasm. To my surprise I did not

fall to the ground, but continued spinning around on the apex of the huge fountain, like a barrel revolving on the toe of a gymnast in the circus.

An instant's reflection—for I revolved mentally while I revolved bodily on the spout—explained the situation. I had often seen a ball dancing for hours on the jet of a fountain, and I was passively performing the same feat. To make myself more like a ball I grasped my feet with my hands, for my life depended upon the geyser's continuing to keep me up, as I was still surrounded by wolves.

After spinning some minutes I grew less afraid of falling. Looking around from my high station, I began to pity the wolves. Every now and then a plaintive howl rose from them. It may have been a lament that the earth had usurped the traditional rights of the pack and swallowed their departed brethren; but I fancied it expressed a sentiment more immediately connected with myself. It seemed to say "Alas! so near, and yet so far!" I soon found myself quite entering into the feelings of the beasts—which I much preferred to entering into their mouths. They were cold and hungry, and I was warm and comfortable, for the water of this geyser was just pleasantly hot. Then my turning around and bobbing up and down must have seemed a sort of mockery to them. And they must have experienced perpetual disappointments, expecting me to tumble down every second moment, for in all probability they had never before seen a ball supported by a jet of water.

After some hours the tantalized wolves were driven away by a tribe of Indians who were passing by on the war-path. The savages forgot their wonted self-control and gazed with unconcealed amazement at my performance on the spout. At last I stretched myself and managed to wriggle off it and fall feet foremost to the ground. I found myself venerated as a great magician, and was at once appointed head medicine-man to the tribe. I spent some weeks with

them under the unchristian name of 'Humming-top' and indeed I felt just like one for the first half of the time.

I did not know there was any geyser in Dakota," said Bill.

Nor did I, said the Major, till then. Fat Bear, my kind host, told me this one only played once in a generation or so. It was probably roused into activity before its time by the fall of the wolves. Now you know why I think your Icelandic story possible—that a geyser may be made to spout prematurely by throwing things into it.

II.

UP THE SPOUT.

"WHAT a spout;" murmured Little Bob reflectively. Waterspout, did you say? asked the Major, looking up from his newspaper.

"No," said Bob; "I was thinking *what a spout* that one in Dakota was."

Please excuse me, said the Major; I really had no notion of making a silly pun; but the slightest thing always does remind me of waterspouts ever since that awful day when I was down in the Maelstrom.

Down in the Maelstrom, exclaimed both boys.

"Down in the Maelstrom," repeated the Major, quietly and distinctly. I felt a natural curiosity to explore that whirlpool. Besides, I thought that Poe's description of its interior needed to be verified by some thoroughly reliable person. So I availed myself of

a friend's offer, and went with him in his yacht to see the midnight sun off the north coast of Norway. Returning, he kindly agreed to aid me in my project of exploring the Maelstrom.

We anchored the yacht a few miles away from the celebrated whirlpool, outside the influence of its suction. I put off in a small boat connected with the yacht by a stout rope. I had taken care to provide a huge coil of brand new rope, and had seen by inspection that every inch of it was sound. They paid it out from the yacht as I increased my distance, and they were to cease doing so as soon as my boat began to disappear down the outward incline of the Maelstrom. Whenever I wanted to be pulled back I was to hold up a flag.

I had little rowing to do, for I presently began to be drawn forward with ever-increasing speed. The motion, which was exhilarating at first, soon grew alarming.

Strange phenomena, too, appeared in the sky. A cloud overhead seemed dancing round and round, and another farther on seemed imitating it. Anywhere else I would have continued gazing at these novel spectacles. Then and there I fancied they were only optical illusions, reflections of the mighty whirlpool underneath.

Soon I was too close to the yawning mouth of the Maelstrom to spare another glance at clouds or horizon. The roar was growing terrific, and the boat was travelling at lightning speed. The rope, it flashed upon me, even now might fail to stand the strain when it was drawn taut. I repented of my rashness in coming so far, and hastily raised my flag.

They saw my signal in the yacht. In a few seconds I felt a check, and the rushing water from behind began to dash over the stern. Then, with a sound like a groan, the iron staple to which the rope was fastened, was dragged out of the wood; and the boat bounded down the outer slope of the whirlpool. Instinctively I

threw myself after the retiring rope, in a mad attempt to grasp it. I only succeeded in placing myself a few yards behind the boat, in whose wake I was sucked swiftly on to the abyss.

The boat, and I after it, described a few circles round the edge of the chasm without any very perceptible descent. Then the boat began to sink more rapidly, still following the circular eddy of the whirlpool. After a while increasing darkness, added to my own increasing dizziness, hid it from me, and I never saw it again.

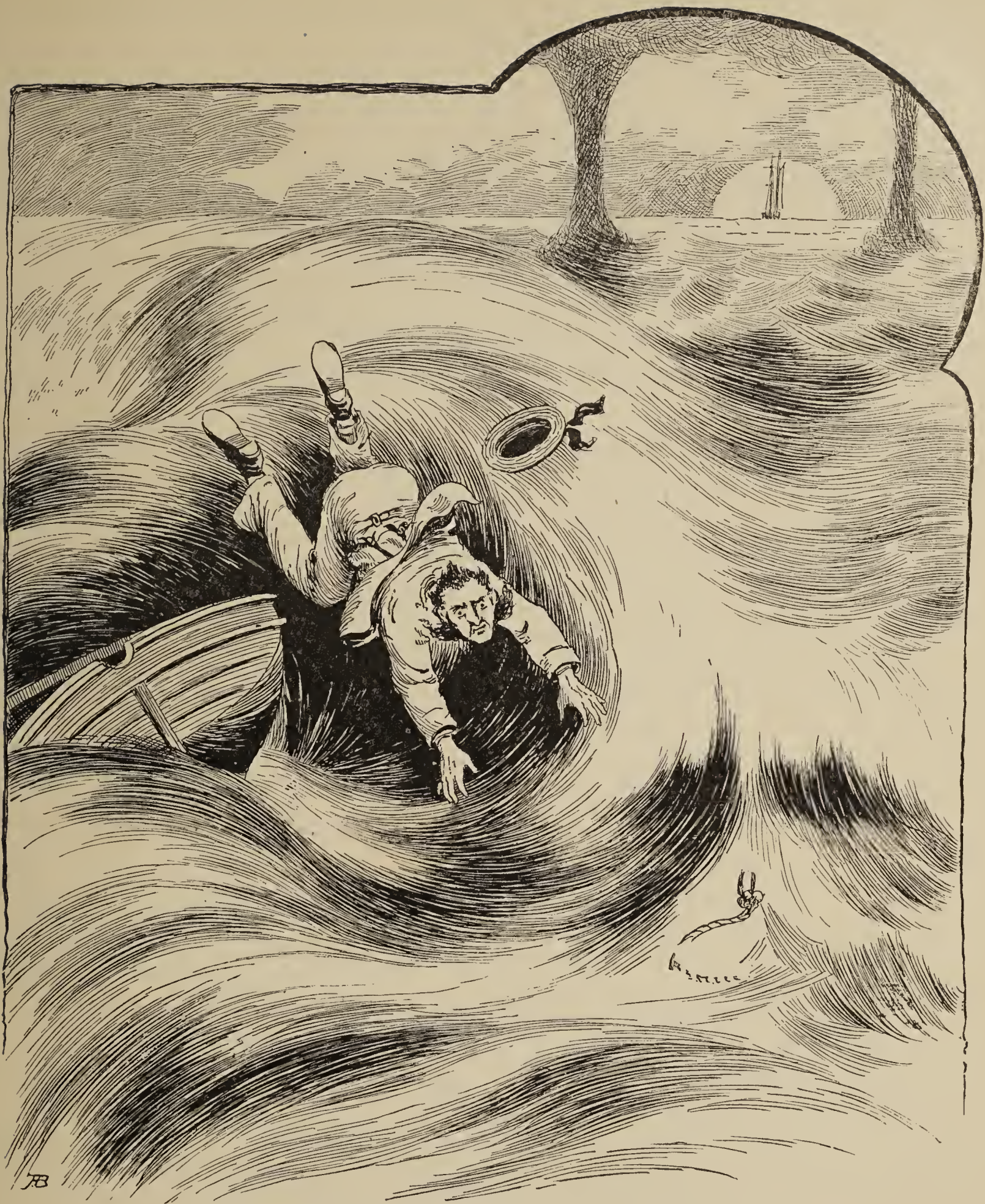
I now began to look anxiously for Poe's reflex eddy which carried his hero back to the light. But I saw no signs of it—it was unfortunately taking a recess that day.

“I had given up hope, and the roar from the mysterious depths below had focused my failing senses. Suddenly the twisting tunnel in which I was spirally descending was completely darkened *from above*. The ocean had apparently closed over me. I was covered with a seething and bubbling mass of waters. My limbs were nearly dragged from their sockets by conflicting floods. I became unconscious.

Then came a state of ecstasy. I seemed to breathe again and be borne on water that was half air. I rather fancied I was dead, but I was quite happy, nevertheless. My course was upward, in swift but gentle curves. I felt like Iris floating up a rainbow. Light glimmered and then flashed upon my eyes. A sunbeam sparkled through a hollow pillar of water round which I was circling upwards. It was like the electric light on a fountain in a transformation scene.

Was I dead? I asked myself again; or would I be rudely awakened from a too blissful dream? I mused complacently on all my good actions in the world below. My musing was not long.

The upward movement ceased. For an instant I floated almost horizontally upon a dense cloud. Then I was whirled downwards



DOWN THE MAELSTROM AND UP THE WATER-SPOUT.

on a funnel of vaporous water, like that in which I had mounted to the clouds. But I was on the outside now. I saw the sea below and caught a glimpse of a vessel hundreds of yards beneath. In another moment I was whirled behind the revolving column of water; but I saw the vessel again every few seconds, and she seemed nearer and larger every time. When she last became invisible I was hardly higher than her topmast, and not much farther than a hundred yards from her.

Just then I heard a loud boom, and the water that had buoyed me up yielded beneath me. The liquid column fell, shattered from its summit to its base. I descended in a cataclysm and struck the sea.

When I came to my senses I was lying—

(“So I should have supposed,” whispered Bill.)

—on the deck of the yacht,” the Major went on, unaware of his nephew’s rudeness. “My friend Browne had wrapped me in hot flannel and was pouring brandy down my throat.

“That was a good shot of ours at the waterspout,” he said. “If we had missed it, it would have burst upon us. There were two of them: you went up one, I suppose, and came down the other. You must have sunk pretty deep when that near spout burst; for you were good ten minutes under water before we picked you up. Halloa, what’s that in your hand?”

It was a pretty little shell from the bottom of the sea.

“I should have thought waterspouts were rare visitors in those latitudes,” observed Bill, with a slight elevation of both eyebrows.

“Your opinion quite tallies with mine, said Major Mendax. I never saw another thereabouts. And I was not sorry for their absence, either; for waterspouts do not always give a fellow a lift just when he wants one.

III.

SAVED BY THE ENEMY.

HOW the buffalo bull that hunted me by the banks of the Treacherous River can have excused his behavior to his conscience I haven't the ghost of an idea. I had neither teased him, nor shot at him, nor challenged him to a race; and it certainly was not my fault if any other animal had put him in a bad temper. I had, it is true, just fired at a zebu; but I had not hit it, and, anyhow, the zebu is only a distant and poor relation of the buffalo. However, I thought it more prudent to run than to protest—especially as the beast charged before I had time to reload.

I had rather the best of the running while we were in the small jungle where the chase began; but when he ran me out into the open I had not the shadow of a chance, unless I could manage to reach the river before he did. It was two hundred yards away, and I had hardly forty yards' start.

The heat was overpowering in the sun, and once I stumbled over the root of a withered tree, losing several precious seconds. Some fifty yards from the stream I saw that I must be overtaken; so I stood stock-still until the buffalo was almost touching me and had lowered his head for a toss. Then I took a standing jump to one side, and halted once more. The impetus of his career had carried him half way to the river before he could turn and rush at me again. This time his speed was more moderate, and I barely managed to

avoid his horns. But before he could check himself I had got a good start towards the river.

He was nearly up to me again when I reached the bank and blindly "took a header." Fortunately there was a deep pool at the spot, and I kept under water half way across, in order to perplex the bull. When my head emerged from the water I was delighted to see him standing still upon the bank, uncertain what to do. Before his mind was made up I had reached the other shore and clambered up the bank.

The buffalo continued looking at me, now and then digging up clouds of dust with his fore feet. I fondly hoped that I was out of danger. But I had yet to learn how the stream I had just crossed had gained its name of the Treacherous River.

When I tried to move on, I could not stir my feet. While I was gazing at the angry but undecided bull, I had not felt them sinking; and now I was above my ankles in a quicksand!

In my first horror I struggled wildly—which apparently made me sink faster and certainly tired me for nothing. Then I calmed myself and attempted to think. I could expect no aid from the savage natives, if any of them should come my way; and I knew my own comrades had left the wagons on the spoor of a giraffe, in the very opposite direction to mine. Yet I shouted and shouted, till I grew fainter and fainter and the bull more and more excited.

After a while, though, my unanswered cries had another effect: they forced me to fix my hopes upon the only creature that was close enough to help me. I saw my way plainly enough now. I would have to call my enemy to the rescue! The horns of the buffalo should save me from the horns of my dilemma—"when in doubt, a toss up!"

I pulled my red handkerchief out of my pocket—not an instant too soon, for the quicksand was beginning to engulf my coat-

ails. I waved the hated color up and down. The bull, already furious at my shouting, flounced into the river and swam straight at me.

I had now sunk to my waist, and I calculated that before he could reach me, a few more inches of my body would have vanished in the horrid luke-warm mud. He would, then, just have time to put his horns under my arms; and this, indeed, would be his only way to have a good, satisfactory toss. He ought to be able to take true aim, because I could not possibly shrink; and I was glad to see that the points of his horns were about the width of my arm-pits apart.

When he came out of the water, I held my arms a little from my sides, as indeed I had to do to prevent my elbows entering the quicksand. This posture of my arms, I thought, would give him every chance to get his horns under them; while to raise them higher would expose them to almost certain dislocation, even if the beast should kindly prefer tossing to goring me.

As he was floundering over the dozen feet of quicksand that separated me from the water's edge, I had my eyes shut, and felt like little Tell when his papa was aiming at the apple on his head.

The beast struck me as I hoped, the tips of his horns passing under and out behind my arm-pits, without even tearing my clothes. But his horns were not quite so wide apart towards their roots, and they painfully compressed my upper ribs in front. Yet this was probably the saving of me, for, if the whole strain had fallen on my arms alone, it would probably have wrenched them from their sockets. As it was, you may guess that the neck muscles of an angry buffalo could not jerk three quarters of a man's body out of a very tenacious quicksand in a second without nearly splitting him in two. But luckily I came up whole.

From a buffalo's point of view the toss was far from a success.

With all his vast muscular exertion he only just threw me over his shoulders and on to his own back. This effort, added to his greater weight and the comparative smallness of his feet, had of course made him sink much more rapidly than I had done. When I lit on his back, his fore legs were covered and his hind legs nearly so, and in a few moments his body was as steady as a log.

It would have been pleasanter for both parties had he been able to pitch me right into the river. As it was, six feet or so of treacherous sand lay between his hind-quarters and the water's edge. I hastily walked along his slowly sinking carcass, balanced myself for a spring, and barely cleared the intervening mud, flopping flat on the surface of the stream in a pose which nearly took my breath away, and would have shocked any professor of calisthenics.

As I came in sight of the wagons I saw my two companions returning from their hunting. To my horror they instantly covered me with their rifles, with the eagerness of naturalists about to bag a new specimen. You see I had lost my hat and gun, and was wetter and dirtier and a good deal taller than my old self.

"Taller, Uncle?" cried little Bob, opening his eyes unusually wide, "How was that?"

Why; owing to the way my ribs and joints were stretched in that tug between the buffalo and the quicksand, of course. No wonder the fellows couldn't guess who or what I was. I had to reason with them several minutes, and to ask after their brothers and sisters, before I could convince them that I was not some sort of a gorilla or cannibal who had got inside my clothes and outside myself.

IV.

THE MAJOR ON "THE GIRAFFE."

"**H**AVE you seen my new book, Uncle?" said little Bob, one evening. "I've won the prize in composition."

Bravo! said the Major, looking at the book; that's more than your uncle ever did.

Did you ever try?" asked Bob.

Once, said the Major, going over and taking an old paper out of his desk. Here is the very essay. It was my earliest effort, added he, gazing fondly at it.

"Let us see it," cried Bill, laying hands upon the production, and beginning to read:

THE GIRAFFE.

No wonder the toper in the play sighed for a giraffe's neck, or that Mr. Smith, when he saw the animal in the Park, should have exclaimed, "Imagine two yards of sore throat!"

The pains and pleasures of the camelopard are, indeed, intense beyond the ordinary lot. When he reaches a spring after a weary pilgrimage in the desert, he enjoys himself hugely. The water gurgles refreshingly down six feet of neck hose, making a miniature cataract. He has been seen to smile a minute or two after swallowing a peculiarly nice plantain, like a Scotchman laughing at a joke five minutes after its utterance. The pleasant morsel seems to grow sweeter as it goes down, and when it comes to the last few feet of windpipe, the

animal's keen enjoyment overcomes his sense of decorum at meals, and he breaks into a chuckle.

On the other hand, when a disappointed giraffe gulps down his bitterness at the triumph of a favored rival, the convulsive spasm ripples painfully down till it reaches the uttermost end of his throat.

The death-rattle in the throat of a departing camelopard is like a whole orchestra out of tune.

The song of the giraffe once heard is never forgotten. It probably suggested to the poet the exquisite idea of "linked sweetness long drawn out."

To see an unrepining giraffe swallowing bitter almonds which he has mistaken for sweet ones, and attempting to cover his distress, is a spectacle of patience and long-suffering, piteous as it is sublime.

In running matches a giraffe can always beat a horse of exactly equal speed. At the winning post he has merely to stretch out his head a few yards and win by a neck. A lion can get better time out of a giraffe than the most skilful jockey.

The lazy and voluptuous monarch of the Nevva-washees, who does not conceal his dislike for uncooked Baptist missionaries, fords the swollen Niger in a palankeen suspended from the horns of two domestic camelopards, and thus preserves his sacred person from contact with the water. It has not yet been settled by naturalists whether a giraffe, getting out of his depth, would swim with his neck as an eel, or with his legs like another quadruped. No giraffe has ever been seen out of his depth since the Flood.

It is not expensive to keep a tame camelopard. If you fence in a narrow walk for him around the boundaries of your property, he will graze upon the neighbors' trees and flowers. On a nutting expedition a well-educated giraffe is more useful than a crook. They have not yet been utilized as fire-escapes in this country.

A camelopard never bows to acquaintances. He thinks it would

be lowering himself too much. A reader of character, judging from the expression of his neck, would suppose that he was also of a far-reaching disposition. But he is really an amiable beast, and lets infants call him "Neck-neck" without resenting the familiarity. It is well this is so, for a stiff-necked and unbending giraffe would be a sad affliction to any menagerie. He would necessitate new doors in every tent or building where he was exhibited. The innocent character of this animal has needlessly puzzled zoologists. His good morals are plainly owing to the fact that the rest of his body is more under control of the head than is the case with any other quadruped. Indeed, he is the only four-footed beast whose head has proper facilities for biting every rebellious member, and whose legislative department is backed by suitable executive power.

* * * * *

"Why didn't they give you the prize, Uncle?" asked little Bob, when the reading was over.

The virtuous examiner, answered the Major, thought the essay too fanciful, and so, on moral grounds, he gave the premium to another boy, who had "cribbed" his truthful essay from Buffon.

V.

FINDING THE MAGNETIC POLE.

“I SHOULD like to have your yachting friend’s account of that waterspout affair,” remarked Bill. “I’d like to know what he took you for as you were coming down—an angel, or a merman, or a whirling dervish?”

Your curiosity can never be gratified, and your flippancy grieves me, said the Major with emotion. Poor Browne is dead. He died (or more strictly he departed) on that same voyage, a martyr to science.

After my descent of the Maelstrom we sailed into the Polar seas to try and find the North Pole or the Magnetic Pole, whichever came first. I had an idea of my own about the correct principle on which to search for the latter.

Wishing to keep my idea to myself, I had a couple of large magnets sewn into the lining of my fur coat. Of course I was prepared, when I should feel the attraction growing too strong, to take off the coat and, fastening it to the mast by a rope, to let it fly forwards as a guide, and partial motor, to the Magnetic Pole.

It was a wonderfully open season in the Polar seas, and we had got safely up into the eighties when one day we were alarmed by a strange variation of the compass. The magnetic needle, which in the morning had been pointing at N. N. W., went rapidly round till it pointed almost due West. The Magnetic Pole was apparently on our starboard beam.

This at least being my conclusion when the officer of the watch

called my attention to the phenomenon. I ran to get my fur coat, which I had not worn that day owing to a singularly warm southern breeze. The garment was not in my berth, and I could not find it anywhere below.

While I was looking for it the sound of laughter called me on deck, fully prepared for some nonsense on Browne's part. Poor fellow, he was too much given to fooling, and used to ask me once or twice a day whether the waters of the Maelstrom were intoxicating.

There he was, sure enough, dressed in my overcoat, pacing up and down and imitating my meditative walk.

The yacht had already been headed westward, in the presumed direction of the Magnetic Pole. I noticed that Browne seemed to feel increasing difficulty, each time he turned, in *walking aft*. This could not be owing to the wind, which was blowing on the beam. It must be the magnets, it struck me all at once.

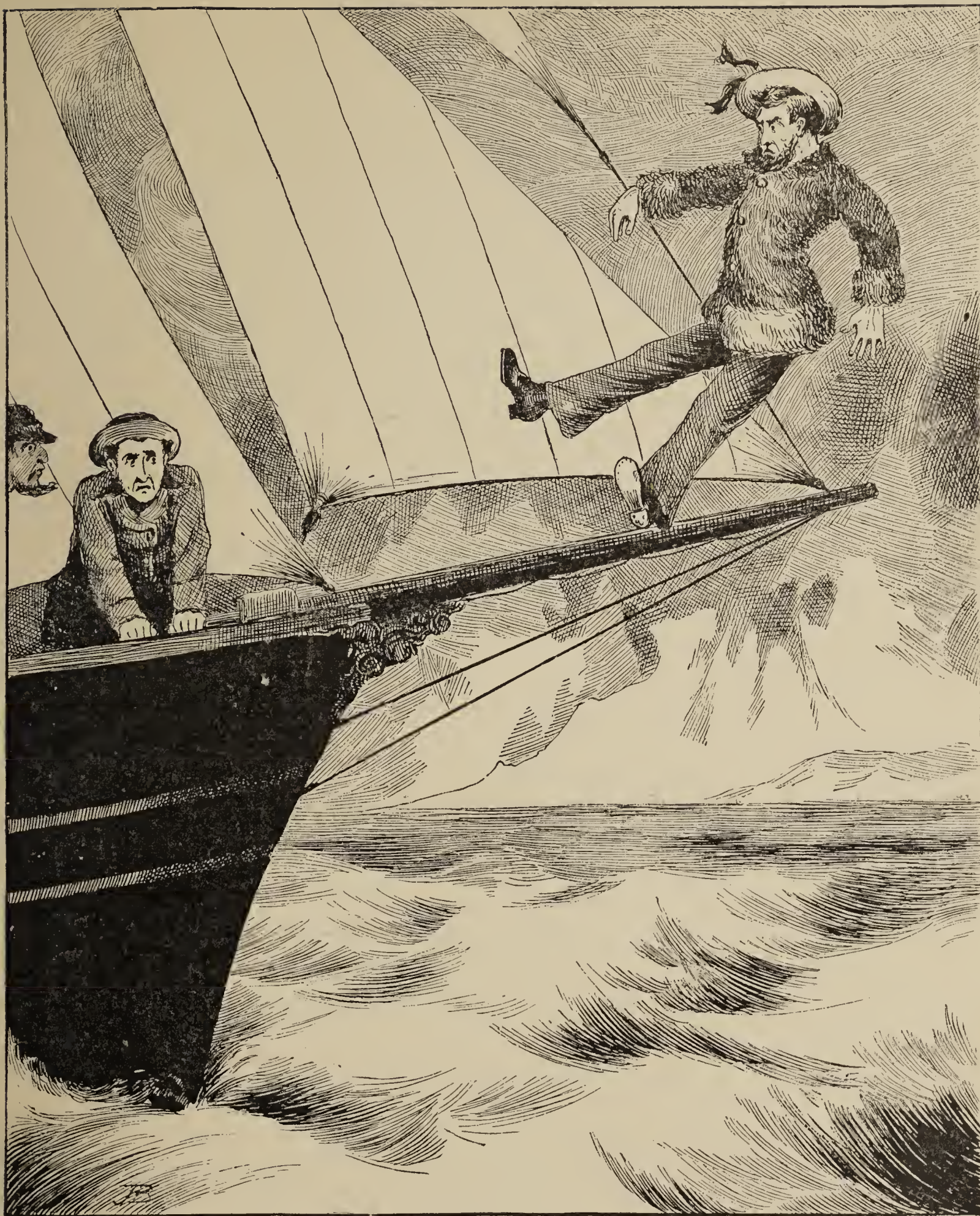
“‘Take care!’ I shouted, as Browne rushing forwards caught wildly at the jib-boom. ‘There are mag——’”

I was too late, the attraction was resistless now. Though he managed to catch the boom with one hand, this only stayed his fate for a moment. In another second he was soaring into the air in front of the vessel. His skylarking in jest had ended in his skylarking in earnest.

While I was gazing after my friend, the master succeeded in putting the yacht about with some difficulty. Fortunately for us there was no magnetized iron on board, except the needles of the compasses; and these flew off their fixings and made violent efforts to escape.

But how is it that Mr. Browne went up in the air—one would have fancied he would have been dragged along the surface of the water or the ice?” said Bill.

One would have fancied so, and one would have fancied wrong,



DEPARTING FOR THE MAGNETIC POLE.

for he left us like a bird, moving a little upwards if anything—which clearly proves that the centre of attraction is nearer the top than the bottom of the Pole.

“ But the Magnetic Pole isn’t a pole at all ! ” cried Bill.

Isn’t it ? ” said Major Mendax, “ Were you ever there ? ”

“ No,” said Bill ; “ nor were you.”

Well, not exactly,” said the Major ; “ but you see I had a friend who was.

I often lie awake at night and muse upon the unsolved problems of Browne’s fate. Whether he reached the Pole alive ; whether he planted on it the British flag that he carried in his pocket or the Stars and Stripes that he carried in my pocket ; whether he froze too stiff for the use of prudent white bears that have only their teeth and claws to depend on for their living ; whether he is balanced by the two magnets on the top of the Pole ; or whether he stands forth horizontally at right angles to it, on account of the nails in his boots and their susceptibility to attraction—these are speculations of entrancing interest to me, knowing him as no one else ever did know him.

In all the excitement of his flight, he was alive to the grandeur of his destiny as the discoverer or rediscoverer of the North Magnetic Pole. His last words showed this. The corner of a light cloud had just hidden him forever from us, when his voice reached us through the still, crisp Polar air. He may have felt but he resisted the temptation to exclaim ‘ Excelsior ! ’

Don’t forget the E ! ’ was what he cried ; and I understood him. He did not wish to go down to posterity as an ordinary Brown.

VI.

A VACILLATING BEAR.

“OH, uncle, you must tell us some stories!” cried little Bob, running over from grandmamma’s corner; “grandmamma says you used to tell *such* stories before you went to Africa, and she’s afraid you’ll tell more than ever now. I don’t see why African stories should frighten her—I love them.”

My child, I never tell stories, said the Major.

“One,” whispered grandmamma.

But, resumed the Major, if you are good boys and don’t interrupt, I might tell you a few events of a highly moral kind.

“Two,” whispered grandmamma.

These adventures, continued the Major, in his dignified manner, teach that “necessity is the mother of invention,” that you should “never say die,” and sundry other morals. Most of them are experiences of my own.

“Three,” whispered grandmamma.

One at a time is all I can manage—you mustn’t bother me for more, boys.

“All serene,” said bumptious Bill; “out with Number One.”

One morning, began the Major, my negro gardener came to me in great alarm and stated that his twin sons, Mango and Chango, had taken out his gun that morning, and had been missing ever since. I at once loaded my rifle, loosed my Cuban blood-hound, and followed the man to his hut. There I put the dog upon the children's scent, following on horseback myself.

It turned out that the young scamps had gone on the trail of a large bear, though they were only thirteen years old, and their father had often warned them not to meddle with wild beasts. They began their adventure by hunting the bear, but ended, as often happens, in being hunted by the bear: for Bruin had turned upon them, and chased them so hard that they were fain to drop the gun and take to a tree.

It was a sycamore of peculiar shape, sending forth from its stem many small, but only two large, branches. These two were some thirty feet from the ground, and stretched almost horizontally in opposite directions. They were as like each other as the twin brothers themselves. Chango took refuge on one of these, Mango on the other.

The bear hugged the tree till he had climbed as far as the fork. There he hesitated an instant, and then began to creep along the branch which supported Chango. The beast advanced slowly and gingerly, sinking his claws into the bark at every step, and not depending too much upon his balancing powers.

Chango's position was now far from pleasant. It was useless to play the trick—well known to bear-hunters—of enticing the animal out to a point where the branch would yield beneath its great weight, for there was no higher branch within Chango's reach, by catching which he could save himself from a deadly fall.

Three more steps, and the bear would be upon him or he would be upon the ground. Brave as the boy was, his teeth chattered.

At this moment Mango, nerved to heroism by his brother's peril, moved rapidly from the opposite limb of the tree. Stepping behind the bear, he grasped with one hand a small higher bough, which extended to where he stood, but not to where his brother lay; with the other hand he seized the animal firmly by its stumpy tail. The bear turned to punish his rash assailant; but, angry as he was, he turned cautiously. It was no easy task to right-about-face on a branch which had already begun to tremble and sway beneath his weight.

Chango was saved, for the bear evidently had transferred his animosity to Mango, whom he pursued, step by step, towards the extremity of the other limb. But Chango was not the boy to leave his brother and rescuer in the lurch. Waiting until the enraged brute was well embarked upon Mango's branch, he pulled its tail, as he had seen his brother do before. Again Bruin turned awkwardly, and resumed the interrupted chase of Chango.

The twins continued their tactics with success. Whenever the bear was well advanced on one limb and dangerously close to one twin, the other twin would sally from the other limb and pull the beast's tail. The silly animal always would yield to his latest impulse of wrath, and suffer himself to be diverted from the enemy who was almost in his clutches.

After two hours of disappointment he recognized his mistake. He was now, for the tenth time, on Chango's branch, and very near Chango. In vain Mango dragged at his hinder extremity: he kept grimly on till Mango, forced to choose between letting go the brute's tail or the higher branch which alone enabled him to keep his feet, let go the former.

Chango could now retreat no further, and he was hardly a yard beyond the bear's reach. The branch was swaying more than ever, and the beast seemed quite aware that he might tax its strength too

far. After a pause, he advanced one of his fore-feet a quarter of a yard. To increase the bear's difficulty in seizing him, the terrified boy let himself down and swung with his hands from the bough.

He was hanging in suspense between two frightful deaths. His heart was sinking, his fingers were relaxing.

Then the deep baying of a hound struck his ear, and his hands again closed firmly on the branch. In a moment a blood-hound and a horseman sprang through the underwood.

Chango held on like grim death—held on till he heard the sharp report of a rifle ringing through the air; held on till the falling carcass of the bear passed before his eyes; held on till I had climbed the tree, crawled along the branch, and grasped his wearied wrists.

If that bear only had understood in time that a boy in the hand is worth two in the bush, he might have lengthened his days and gone down with honor to the grave.

“But, uncle,” observed Bill, “my Natural History says that there is only a single representative of the bear family in all Africa, and it inhabits the Atlas Mountains, and is scarce there.”

I never said I met more than one member of the family, did I? said the Major. And I don't wonder these bears are dying off, either, if they are all equally wanting in decision of character.

VII.

A LION TO THE RESCUE.

I HAD adopted a little orphaned lion, and we grew to be quite fond of each other. In the freshness and fervor of youth, when one is most easily thrilled by poetry and hope, I had been deeply moved by the noble rhyme :

“ If I had a donkey what wouldn’t go,
Wouldn’t I wallop it? Oh, no! *no!* ”

Acting on this merciful sentiment, I never walloped a vicious bulldog, like Emily Bronte ; nor pitch-forked a bull, like certain big, bold boys that I knew ; nor forced reluctant bears to stand on their hind legs and dance, as wandering Italians do. And I carried out the same benevolent principle in the education of my lion. While he was a cub, he was so funny and playful that I never thought of correcting him at all. When he grew up, I was even more gentle with him, for I shrank from lowering the self-respect of a full-grown lion, unused to confinement or restraint, by inflicting the disgrace of a whipping upon him.

The affection of the lion fully repaid me for this forbearance of mine. “ Li,” for I always called him by this short name, would let me pull his mane and ride on his back, would eat out of my hand, and give me his paw at the command, “ Shake hands.” He accompanied me on my walks, and, when I went on my longer expeditions

he would go out day after day in the hope of meeting me returning, and be sulky and restless all the time I was away. On more than one occasion he proved a valuable ally to me.

Li was on the best of terms with my horses and dogs. He did not indeed allow too much familiarity on the part of the latter, and once, when a bloodhound rashly seized a bone that he had dropped, he stunned the robber with a blow of his tail.

When Li was just four years old, I made a short journey into the interior to trade with a chief who had captured a large lot of ostrich feathers. As his character for honesty was not satisfactory, I thought I would bargain that he should send the feathers and be paid on delivery. By this plan I fancied I would secure, not only the goods, but also my own safety, for he could get no pay before my return home. I went accordingly without money, wagons or attendants, mounted on a horse of most remarkable strength and speed. But the chief had sold his feathers before my arrival, and, seeing no profit in letting me go home, he treacherously dragged me from my horse, as he was handing me some water in a cocoa-nut. In a moment I was overpowered and bound by his attendants.

In vain I appealed to his better nature, reminding him that I had never done him any harm; in vain I tried to arouse his covetousness by promising him a splendid ransom. Unhappily I was particularly fat just then, and he had once tasted missionary.

It was past noon and I was respited to the evening, for the chief had dined. Even if I could manage to cut my cords, I had no earthly chance of escape, for my horse had galloped away when I was seized. This action of the trusty and intelligent animal surprised as well as disappointed me, for one night, when he had been scared by a leopard and had broken his tether, he had come back to my camp-fire in the morning, to carry his master home.

Evening came, and I was tied horizontally to two stakes and laid upon a pile of fire-wood, which women and children were industriously increasing every moment. The chief, with his wives and invited guests, was lying on a slope close by me. I heard one young woman smack her lips expectantly. Was she longing to kiss me, or to eat me? The thought was seemingly a strange one in my circumstances. But I had attained the calmness of despair. I had forgiven all my enemies and nearly all my false friends.

At last the chief gave the signal to light the fire.

But a new actor now came upon the scene. My faithful horse appeared at the head of the slope, and came down like a tornado into the assembly, *with something on his back*. In another second an angry lion bounded a dozen feet over the head of the galloping horse, into the very midst of the cannibals. One roar burst from his distended jaws, and it was the sweetest music I had ever heard. It was not a long roar, for my Li wasted no time in noise. With one paw he brained the treacherous chief; with a sweep of his tail he floored his three nearest wives; while at the same moment he snapt off the head of the young lady who had been smacking her lips in such an unpleasant manner. Then he indulged in a long and thunderous roar, which knocked down all the tribe that remained standing, and put most of them into fits. He did the business pretty thoroughly, did my Li.

Presently he came and tore the cords that bound me, and licked my hands and face. He took a little skin off in his excitement, but I forgave him.

Li had evidently been on the look-out for me as usual, and had met my returning horse half-way. The two intelligent animals then exchanged ideas, and decided on a charge of cavalry as the fastest means of rescuing me.

“What became of the lion afterwards?” asked Bob.

My poor Li died on the spot, answered the Major with emotion ; a cannibal's head stuck in his throat,

“ Slowly and sadly I laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory ;
I carved not a line and I raised not a stone,
But I left him alone in his glory.”

Though the cannibals had not the slightest appetite remaining now, I thought it only prudent to ride off at once. But in a few days I returned with a party, and covered his grave with sods. We marked the spot with a headstone bearing the words, “ HERE LIES LI.” There being a spring there, we contrived to make a little fountain, to keep the grass green and mark the place.

“ Where is it ? ” asked Bill. “ I might like to visit it when I go to Africa.”

Ah, would you ? Well, it is between Morocco and Timbuctoo, inclined a little towards the sea. The fountain will guide you, and you cannot mistake the place when you get there. The last time I made a pilgrimage to it, I found a nest of centipedes under the headstone and a leopard's den at the foot of the mound, while a lonely viper was creeping mournfully over the grass. It is easy enough to identify the spot ; but the visiting of shrines in Africa has its drawbacks.

And now, my dear boy, added the Major, if you ever feel a mean temptation to poke wild beasts with sticks through the bars of their cages, just remember the lion of Androclus and my own big Li.

VIII.

A LITTLE GAME OF BLUFF.

IT seems that Pip, the wicked King of Lotoli, at first mistook me for a missionary, owing doubtless to my innocent aspect. Now Pip did not like missionaries, for they made him feel uneasy in his mind. In order, therefore, to get rid of an unpleasant visitor and amuse himself while doing so, he gave me a choice well calculated to embarrass a divine—to win an eating, sleeping, or talking match, or to die. A murder in his code of morals was a very slight offence, and a little fun connected with it would not make it worse, and might as well be enjoyed as not. His servile courtiers chuckled loudly at what they called the richness of the idea.

Put more exactly, I was to outsleep the champion sleeper of the tribe, outeat the champion eater, outtalk the most abusive of Pip's wives, or be executed on the spot. I chose to sleep, and expressed my choice promptly and smilingly, for this was part of my game.

"Guess I *can* sleep *some*," I observed—"just a few, as we say in New England. And with your Majesty's permission I'll put a little wager on the event—my wagon-load of beads against your Majesty's diamonds."

When I made this proposal, it occurred to Pip, as he afterwards admitted, that I might not be a missionary after all and that he had anyhow condemned me for an unproved offense. But his enlighten-

ment came too late to save me. His curiosity and covetousness were aroused; and he thought he had "a pretty soft thing."

"Done!" he said, promptly—"play or pay."

I had placed some reliance on a bottle of patent sleeping powder that I had about me. I thought I might put myself to sleep with it, and perhaps swallow some more as often as I awoke, without being observed. But I abandoned the latter idea when I learned that my competitor had slept ten days at a stretch. To keep myself asleep ten days by the aid of drugs I should have to make my slumber perpetual—"to die, to sleep no more," as Dr. Pangloss neatly observed.

By the terms of the bet, then and there agreed upon, my competitor and I were to be asleep in half an hour. This period he employed in gorging himself to repletion.

I spent the first fifteen minutes in carrying a number of blankets and a waterproof of tarpaulin from my wagon to the ring where our sleep was to take place in public view. These preparations roused the curiosity of the King.

"What are those things for?" he asked through an interpreter. "The weather is sultry and it is the dry season."

"Yes," I replied; "but the rainy season begins *in less than two months*. If I neglected these precautions I might be awakened by rheumatic pains in six weeks or so."

I then rolled myself up in several blankets, with the tarpaulin outside, and laid my head on a bundle of clothes under the shade of an umbrella that I had planted in the ground. The King's eyes, I noticed, were very wide open as I closed mine. Having taken a dose of my sleeping powder, I was sound asleep in three minutes.

In a very short time I was awaked by a violent shaking. The umbrella was gone and the sun was streaming in my eyes. The interpreter, who stood beside me, had applied this test to make sure

that I was really sleeping. He looked terribly hot, for I had not opened my eyes at once when I awoke. I thought a little more exercise might do him good.

"The King wants to know what you will take and cry quits," he whispered.

Pip evidently did not understand the great American game of bluff.

"Seeing it is His Gracious Majesty," I said, "I will take the biggest diamond and a free pass home, and call it off."

"It is a go," said the interpreter; "but mind this is your own proposal, for His Majesty is very scrupulous about keeping his agreements."

"He is willing to take the *two* biggest diamonds and a free pass," were the words in which he misrepresented my proposition to the King; for this interpreter was an American freedman and had been a colored member of the South Carolina legislature soon after the war—and in that learned assembly he had picked up the following poetical truth:

"One and one give us two—
One for me and one for you."

Before I left the capital of Lotoli I had to witness the execution of my unhappy competitor. It was not only my extensive preparations that had made the King tremble for his diamonds, but also the fact that his man could not come to time at the beginning of the match. The more he tried to sleep the more he shivered, for at the last moment Pip had very imprudently threatened to smother him if he failed to win. It seldom pays to murder sleep.

Perhaps I ought to mention that the interpreter who was so fond of simple addition and division nearly fell a victim to a similar misconception of his character. For, before he took to politics he had been a waiter in a Southern hotel and was ever afterwards given

to wearing a white and clerical looking tie, which he found as good as an introduction to fresh and credulous strangers. Pip, who possessed a certain sense of humor, learning from its wearer that the said article of dress was named a white choker observed that a missionary's garment should be true to its name and forthwith ordered the new-comer to be throttled with his own cravat. But the profane nature of the terms applied by the condemned man to his executioner entirely removed the King's suspicion as to his clerical character and procured him an immediate pardon.

IX.

A MUSICAL TYRANT.

“Oh, many a wicked smile he smole
And many a wink he wunk ;
And, oh, it was a fearful thing
To think the thoughts he thunk.”

THIS same King of the Lotolies practised some ingenious cruelties. One day, as he was enjoying the gentle exercise of administering the bastinado, he was struck by the great variety of tone in the groans of his victims. So he commanded his carpenter to construct wooden stocks, to confine (soles upwards) the feet of eight captives who were in the habit of groaning promptly when hit by the rod, and whose different notes of pain formed a complete octave. He had a second frame constructed for eight more wretches whose average groans ranged an octave higher. On this human harp, as he observed with an inhuman chuckle, he intended to play sole-stirring tunes.

He began to practice the national air, a very simple melody. He

tried with temporary success to regulate the length of the note by the violence of the blow and hoped soon to be able to strike quavers, crotchets, and all the other notes at will. At first indeed he signally failed in bringing out the shorter notes, for the poor fellows, hitherto accustomed to nothing but hard hits, howled loud and long on the descent of every blow alike. Soon, however, the cries grew nearly proportioned to the blows. But this was the case for a short time only, for before the performance had satisfied King Pip the instrument was hopelessly out of tune. Some of the animated notes were sounding incessantly; others were insensible and did not sound at all.

In vain the baffled tyrant replaced these injured notes by fresh ones: in vain he tried new arrangements of the captives and the lookers-on. He never could manage to produce the national air without some discords.

“At least I have invented foot-notes!” said the unprincipled Pip. Then he plied his rod rapidly all round and stalked away in a little better humor, for a grand vocal finale was ringing in his ears.

* * * * *

“I have a rod in pickle for you,” muttered an agile chief, scowling after the tyrant and with difficulty restraining his noble rage, which was one day to burst out in open defiance. “You’ve turned the national air of Lotoli into a dirge; but you’ll quaver for this crotchet yet.”

The indignant chief was Tehee. He had punned in bitter mockery only, for he scorned the puns and other vices of that corrupt court.

X.

A LEEK FOR THE MAJOR.

AMONG the barbarities invented by this tyrant of Lotoli was a peculiarly wanton one of which I myself was the intended victim. On my third visit to his capital, one of my narratives having passed his limited experience and understanding, he rashly suspected me of practising upon his credulity. And, in his resentment he composed an execrable couplet which, being translated, runs thus :

“Of all the liars 'neath the sky
The very biggest one am I.”

This jingle I was sentenced to recite aloud before Pip's ribald court on an approaching high holiday. If I refused, it was politely hinted to me through his Minister of the Interior (as Pip jocosely named his head cook) that I might take my choice of being boiled or roasted.

How to escape both the shame of yielding and the penalty of refusing ! Having pondered long over this problem and seeing no solution to it, I craved a private audience with the King. I thought I would try the effect of humoring his strange delusion that I was given to exaggeration.

“Your majesty,” I cried, bowing with whatever of grace I had

acquired in African courts, "I have gone to great lengths in the pursuit of truth."

"I should say so," said the unsympathetic Pip.

"In my credulous childhood," I went on, "I heard that truth lay in a well, and I descended into a well and caught, not truth, but a cold."

"Perhaps Truth thought you could beat her at lying in a well and kept away," observed the tyrant grinning at his own wit.

"Again I heard that truth was in wine; but wine only made me tell stories. I raved about truth, and my ravings were fictitious. And whenever I did tell the truth people said I was telling lies. What was I to do?"

"Besides, the pursuit of truth is ennobling. Is it well, O King, to catch Truth and end the noble chase?"

Pip smiled at this plea: he was smart enough to see that it was a fallacy.

"An 'illicit process of the Major'?" suggested Bill, who had dipped into logic.

So I tried another line of argument. "If your Majesty," I said, "is pleased to assert that I am a liar, is not that enough? Do your subjects need my poor testimony to be convinced? One seldom likes a man who calls him a liar: will your Majesty force me to dislike myself?"

The tyrant grinned again, but was inexorable. In fact he was fond of hearing his own poetry recited (like two or three other people), and I was to suffer for his vanity.

I was now thoroughly out of humor with myself. I had "given myself away" in vain; and I felt like a victim of persecution who, having renounced his belief in a moment of weakness, was going to be burned after all. It was at this moment of despondency that my good genius suggested a simple expedient.

“Your word is law, O King, and to this law I bow,” I said. “Promise me only one thing, that there shall be silence from the beginning to the end of my recitation. I wish that no word should interrupt the pointed and rhythmic verses that your Majesty has been pleased to compose.”

“If any one speaks, your penalty is over, and he shall die,” promised His Majesty of Lotoli.

“But if you speak yourself, great King?”

“In that case, also,” said Pip, “we shall excuse you the rest of your performance.”

A little later the court assembled to hear me spout the humiliating lines. A herald proclaimed the conditions I had obtained from the King.

“To repeat a King’s words too hastily,” said I, making my bow to the audience, “is irreverent and revolutionary. I shall therefore, availing myself of his Majesty’s gracious concession, utter his august words with proper awe and deliberation.”

Then, assuming an elocutionary attitude,

“Of,” I began in a loud voice.

“All,” I continued after one minute.

“The,” I went on, in two minutes more.

“Liars,” I added, when my watch showed that four more minutes had gone by.

“Neath,” I said after pausing eight minutes.

The features of several bystanders were horribly contorted at this time. They were struggling for their lives against a dreadful temptation to laugh.

“The,” I articulated sixteen minutes later.

I now saw anger working in the King’s face and I feared that he would repudiate his compact. Happily he was not trained in diplo-

macy and had not learned how a ruler's compact can be repudiated quite respectably, "for considerations of state."

"Sky," I added in thirty-two minutes more.

Then Pip's forbearance ended. He started from his throne in a towering passion, and would have broken the silence himself had not one of his subjects rashly done so before him.

This reckless being was a philosopher, who owned a rude time-piece, made by himself. In his zeal for science, like Archimedes, he forgot about death.

"Your majesty, he is pausing in geometrical progression and it will take him over a month to get through," he exclaimed in the same tone in which Archimedes exclaimed "Eureka." Though the wise man of Lotoli did not chuckle exactly like the Grecian sage.

Here was a scape-goat for my offence. Pip could vent his rage on this self-offered victim without breaking his royal word.

"Off with his head!" roared Pip.

This order and the philosopher were promptly executed.

To my surprise I was allowed to go without any direct permission from the King. At least, when I asked to be excused further attendance at his court, the tyrant made no answer that I could hear to my request, but only called me a name. "Goliah!" he shouted; and it has puzzled me ever since to guess in what respect he thought me like that giant.

"I think I can tell the King's meaning," whispered Bill to his brother: "he said 'Goliah' *in two words*, and the last of them ended in *r*."

It was well for me that I went at once, for the King soon repented of his hasty sentence and laid the blame on me. In fact the ebony sage's worth began to be recognized by the whole tribe the moment the recognition could do him no earthly good. The Lotolies often wax enthusiastic at the death of their clever men. They did not,

indeed, raise a monument to this sage ; but they held a feast in his honor, which feast, sad to say, degenerated into an orgy. It is not uncommon in Africa, as Dr. Johnson might have observed, but for his silly prejudice against America, to.

“ See nations slowly rise and, meanly just
To buried merit, ‘start upon a bust. ’ ”

XI.

THE STIFF NECKS.

WHEN I next returned to Lotoli, I was hanged by that spiteful brute Pip. But my neck was not broken, nor had my arms been pinioned ; and so, when the spectators dispersed, I cut myself down and walked off. I had not been a captive for six months among the Stiff Necks in vain.

This singular tribe, whom I prefer to call by their nickname, practice no industry but stealing. As a natural result many of them die at the hands of the neighbors whom they rob. Among these neighbors hanging is the prevailing form of capital punishment. But the Stiff Necks usually elude the consequences of this penalty by strengthening their necks through a systematic course of training.

Soon after birth their infants are subjected to the test of being lifted by their heads, and those who give way under the strain are deemed unfitted for the needs of existence. Those who survive the Spartan ordeal are often slung on the backs of their nurses and carried about by a string encircling their necks. The schools of the Stiff Necks are models of good order. There the children stand in rows on tiptoe, half suspended by ropes attached to the rafters. Troublesome boys are promptly lifted off the ground, for the other ends of the ropes, which move on pulleys, centre at the teacher's

desk. The ordinary strain is not much felt by the children, who are relieved from it every now and then, and are, besides, allowed a long recess at noon to practise the precepts of their instructors, in stealing their dinners. The boys are even occasionally hanged with weights, increasing with their age, attached to their feet.

Nor are adults exempted from a similar discipline. I myself, for they fondly hoped to make me one of them, was obliged to undergo a daily increasing strain upon my neck. I stood it, they said, uncommonly well, for an outsider. In fact the natural strength of my neck, seemed to show that, in spite of all the deaths I have escaped, I was not born to be hanged.

Bowing is a minor exercise and strengthener of the neck among these people. It is their only mode of greeting an acquaintance, of bidding good-bye, and even of expressing thanks or veneration. I had occasion to regret bitterly the prevalence of this custom.

I forget who it was that threw a doubt upon the boasted painlessness of the guillotine, as compared with the gallows, by applying galvanism to a cut-off head and finding the nerves acted for a number of seconds. Reading of this experiment, I thought at the time that, if a guillotined head could be instantly and hermetically rejoined to the trunk, life might possibly be preserved. While I was with the Stiff Necks one of their chiefs was beheaded for treason, hanging of course not being a serious punishment among them. I had now a means of proving my theory, for was I not agent for a newly invented patent Invisible Cement?

A second after the execution I had united the severed chief and fitted his head accurately on its old stand. With a copious application of the magic cement I exhausted the air between the lately parted portions of the Stiff Neck, and this without interrupting the course of the veins.

He drew a long breath and opened his eyes with an unutterable

expression of gratitude. He had been told that I was going to attempt his restoration, and that his pardon would be granted if I succeeded.

But the excess of his gratitude proved fatal to him. Before the cement was hardened or his neck permanently united, he began to bow his thanks after the manner of his tribe; and he nodded so very vehemently that at the seventh nod he sent his head flying into my face, in such a way that he almost succeeded in committing murder and suicide at the same instant.

It was the most impolite piece of politeness I ever saw—to fling back one's gift at one in this violent way.

This unfortunate finale, for which I was in no way responsible, interfered disastrously with the sale of 'Mendax's Mend-neck,' as I had thought of re-christening my cement. And, failing to induce anybody to have himself executed by way of illustrating its efficacy in a more satisfactory way, I gave up the idea of starting in business as a joiner among the Stiff Necks."

"Were the Stiff Necks cannibals?" inquired little Bob.

To some extent, answered the Major.

"Then why did they keep you a prisoner instead of eating you?" asked Bill.

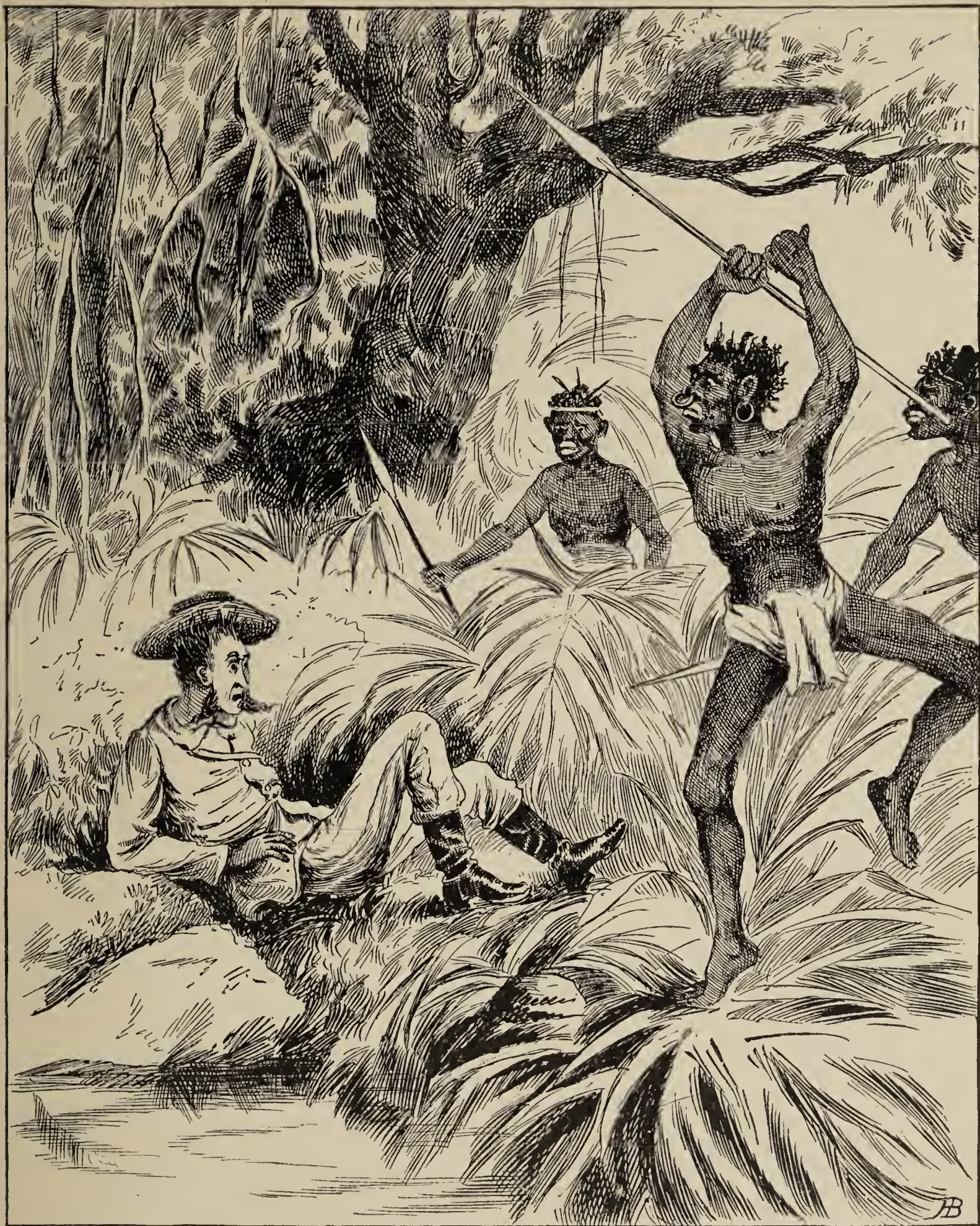
It was owing to an accident, said the Major. A foraging party of the Stiff Necks surprised me very suddenly. Roused from my sleep by their terrific yell, my opening eyes rested on the features of Bigbone Bowza; the fiercest and most repulsive-looking man-eater of the tribe.

My heart sank and my hair rose; and, being rather long at the time, like Oscar Wilde's, my bristling locks lifted my straw hat several inches from my skull. It was then that, to prevent my head-gear tumbling off, I raised my hand instinctively, bending my head unconsciously at the same time.

My seeming politeness at such a dreadful crisis quite charmed Bowza. He could appreciate any civility in the shape of bowing. Bowing to a Stiff Neck was like making the freemason's sign to one of the initiated. Bowza bowed and I bowed back. He bowed again and so did I. Then he jumped forwards and hugged me ; and his friendship, which began then, often afterwards took the same unpleasantly demonstrative form. This kind of gush may be engaging in a nice young woman ; but it did not suit so well in Bowza.

It was his fondness for me that kept me so long a captive among the Stiff Necks.

In consequence of my training among this strange people I had not trembled for my own neck when Pip ordered me to be hanged. But I did feel horribly afraid at first that he might have somebody else hanged with me. For it was one of his ghastly refinements of cruelty to string up two wretches face to face, and then promise to release the one who should smile first. The brute could gaze at their abortive effort. He never seemed to feel any presentiment of his own approaching fate.



A HIDEOUS SURPRISE—HAIR ON END.

XII.

SKETCHING A TARTAR.

WHEN I paid my respects to Pip some months later, the sovereign of the Lotolies was startled and awed at the apparition of a man whom he had seen hanged. My seemingly miraculous preservation ensured me much respect and consideration at first. But no one's life was safe in the long run at the court of so peppery and whimsical a tyrant.

I had felt from the first a desire to take a sketch of Pip's peculiar visage, and this desire grew stronger and stronger. But he always refused to let me. He was dissatisfied with his nose and distrusted every compliment paid to that feature. And he was right. Beneath his many vanities and sins was a layer of sound common sense.

I offered to sketch him with no nose, but he was not pleased with that idea. I offered to sketch him with an average nose, but he said it would be "too thin."

His proboscis was indeed a remarkable one in quantity and quality. It was large when I first saw him, and vice and gluttony had perceptibly added to its size since my last visit. Its hues, too, were more checkered and luxuriant than ever. It was more like some over-ripe tuber than a feature of a human being. In size and color and shape, it in fact very much resembled the more sun-burned half of a banana which I happened to have in my pocket on the eventful occasion when I yielded to temptation and drew a portrait of Pip.

I adopted the bold design of sketching him in his sleep, during his afternoon siesta. I had bribed the two guards whose turn it was to watch outside His Majesty's hut. Plying my pencil rapidly, I had

soon outlined his features and made mental notes for their coloring. But I bent over my drawing block once too often—to complete the shading and append a title which occurred to me—"The Sleeping Beauty."

When I looked up, Pip was awake and blinking spitefully at me.

"It shall be roasting this time, to make sure," he muttered. "Guards!"

But the guards did not stir: it was safer, they thought, to pretend they had been drugged than to admit they had been bribed.

"Guards!" repeated Pip in a tone that I feared might rouse the inmates of the nearest huts.

There are moments when audacity is less dangerous than inaction. I seized Pip by his pampered proboscis with my right hand and pulled and squeezed unmercifully.

"High Treason! Revolution! Civil War!" roared the dismayed monarch gutturally.

I gave his nose a final wrench, taking care at the same time to cover his eyes with my left sleeve. In a second I had broken the banana in my pocket and was flourishing its sun-burned end before his eyes.

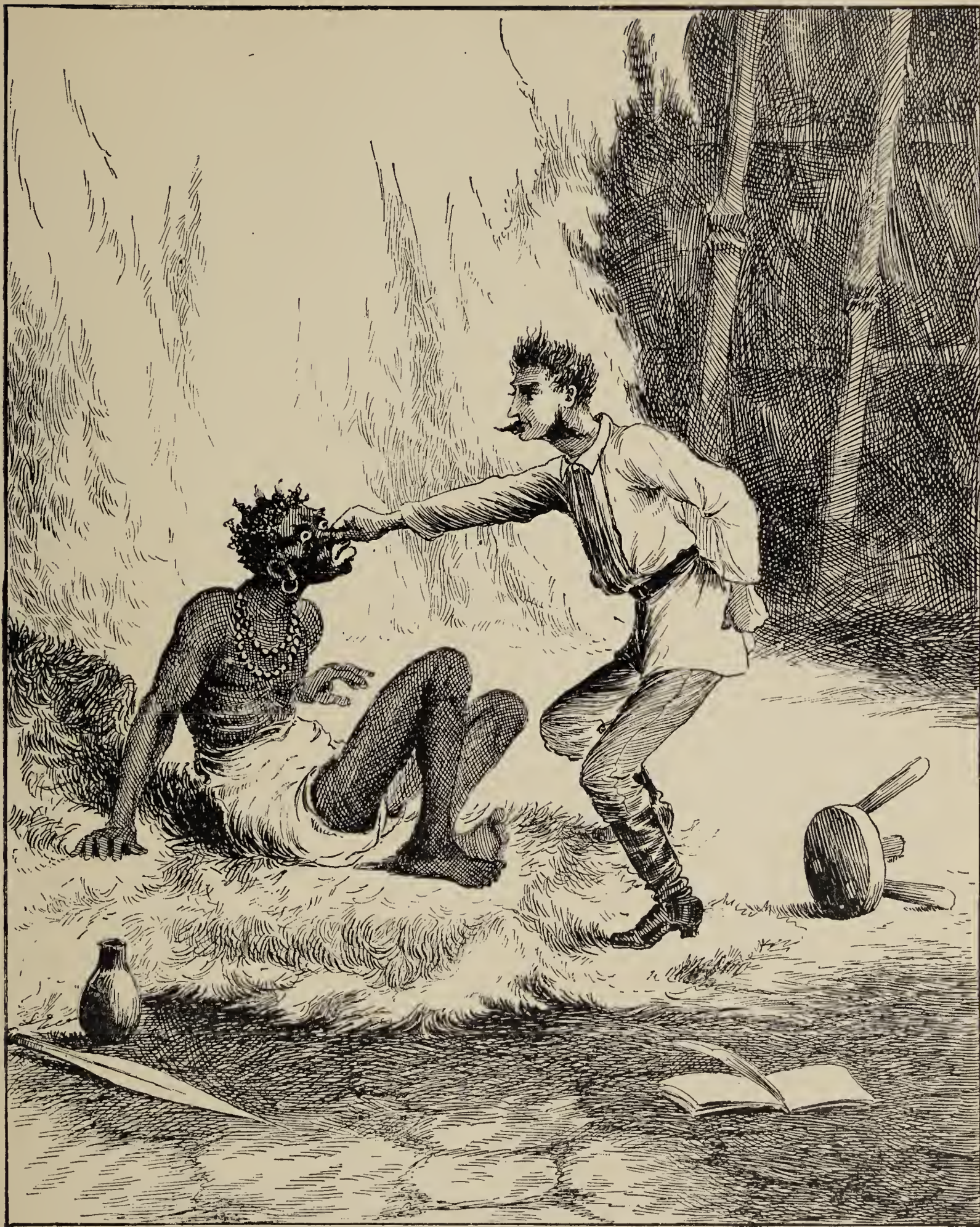
"Look at your fruity old snout!" I cried. "No one else shall lose his life by sketching it."

He raised his hand some inches as if about to verify his loss. But he dropt it with a shudder: he did not want to touch the sore spot, having already had convincing proofs of his calamity. Then he lifted up his voice and wept.

The guards, now thoroughly alarmed, were hurrying to the door.

"Burn me," I cried, "and out goes your proboscis through the window. Pardon me, and your scent shop shall resume business and pay one hundred cents on the dollar."

"I mean," I added, seeing he did not understand my Transatlan-



WRINGING KING PIP'S NOSE.

tic trope, "I mean that the old prob. shall go on again, as sound and firm as ever."

He naturally had faith in my healing powers.

"I'll pardon you," he gasped.

"And you'll excuse the guards too, for dozing?"

"The guards too," he groaned, to the great relief of the two soldiers, who were now trembling at the door.

"Then keep your eyes shut for fear of accidents; and on she sticks," said I, winking at the astonished guards, and kneading vigorously at Pip's bloated and smarting snout.

I finished my surgical operations by emptying a water-skin upon his kingly physiognomy, bidding him to feel his cobbled nose and go to sleep in peace.

I did not fear he would break his promise and put us to death for our offences of that afternoon, for I guessed he would not like to publish the humiliation of his royal nose, and he knew we would not speak of it unless driven to desperation. Yet I shrewdly suspected that he would sooner or later find a pretext and a means for putting us out of the way; and I was about to withdraw secretly from Lotoli, taking with me the two guards whom I had led into danger, when Tehee's rebellion changed all my plans.

XIII.

PASSING ON.

ONE of the court games of Lotoli was known as "Passing On." King Pip, who was fond of studying strange phases of human nature, held the theory that strong passions could be passed from man to man like an electric shock. In testing this theory he invented the game.

He was sitting with his council in a complete circle, the highest members on his right, the lowest on his left, when he abruptly gave his fat Chief Councillor a ringing box on the ear. The Chief Councillor bit his lip and struck the giggling Second Councillor who was on his right. The Second Councillor looked daggers at the Chief Councillor, and avenged the insult he had received upon the Third Councillor. The latter, flushed with wrath against his immediate superiors, vented his wrath upon his immediate inferior.

As the blow was passed on to the right the indignation seemed to pass on with it. The Chief Councillor had actually begun to enjoy the grimaces of his juniors before the buffet had made a complete round of the circle. When the second lowest struck the lowest member of the board and the latter, having royalty on his right and a superior on his left, could only dance with impotent rage, all the rest regained their spirits and enjoyed the game thoroughly.

In fact so boisterous became their mirth that the unhappy junior, seeing himself a public laughing-stock, suddenly ceased his buck-jumps and fled howling to the bosom of his family. There he doubtless found a vent for his pent-up feelings in pounding his wives or

“shaking his mother” in a way that Scotty, the hero-of Buck Fanshaw’s funeral would have deprecated.

The game had proved so very diverting to him that the enthusiastic King started another round of it then and there, by hitting the now hilarious Chief Councillor upon his open mouth. This initiative, which *Bell’s Life* would call “shutting the potato-trap” and the American small boy would call “mashing on the snoot,” was pretty generally followed in the second round, which round was played with an ardor that rendered it intensely gratifying to Pip and the dentists.

So pleased was the tyrant with the success of his experiment that he afterwards started the game every now and then in his court. This he always did abruptly, generally when his parasites seemed enjoying themselves most. So that it became a hard task for his courtiers to display the needful appreciation of the royal jokes and at the same time to avoid the too broad smile that would probably suggest a rubber of “Passing on” to a monarch so fond of startling contrasts.

* * * * *

“He likes ‘Passing on,’” muttered the nimble Tehee to his two fellow-conspirators at the close of a spirited game: “perhaps he won’t like ‘Passing away’ quite so much.”

This was the day before the revolt.

XIV.

THE PROPHECY.

AT last the cup of the cruelties of King Pip was quite full. It was the annual "custom" or annual butchery at Lotoli. The tyrant had feasted on horrors all the forenoon. Then he had dined luxuriously in the open air, surrounded by some caged cannibals whom his warriors had captured in a raid. Their hungry faces, he said, improved his appetite, just as the sound of rain on the roof of his royal hut made him appreciate the dryness and comfort within.

The crowning attraction of the festival came last. The conquered rebel chieftains, Tookee, Hooke, and Tehee, were ushered into the royal presence, stepping proudly and defiantly though they were chained together. They had been sentenced to fight a huge gorilla that had been provoked into pursuing a canoe on the Gaboon, and then captured in a net and towed to shore half-drowned. Now it was caged and ready to minister to the vengeance and amusement of the King.

A choice of weapons had at first been offered to the three prisoners. But that very morning a famous soothsayer, a seventh son of a seventh daughter and born with an odd number of toes, had said ominously: *The national weapon shall slay the great ape, and the slayer shall die a king.* In consequence of this alarming prediction the superstitious despot forbade the use of the bow, for all his councillors agreed that it was the national weapon of the Lotolies. After the rebels should have been slain, Pip purposed winding up the sport, and securing himself for life upon the throne in accordance

with the prophecy, by shooting the gorilla with arrows from his safe and comfortable seat above the walls of the arena.

Meanwhile he was in fine spirits and in a pleasurable state of expectancy, for he had never seen a gorilla killing a human being. It would be a new sensation, and he expected to enjoy it as thoroughly as Squeers enjoyed his first opportunity of thrashing a boy in a cab. He had already rewarded the courtier to whose suggestion he owed so agreeable a prospect.

Tookee, Hooke, and Tehee were finally only given three weapons—a sword, an assegai and a lasso. They drew lots for first choice. Hooke, who won, selected the assegai, thinking it *might* be the national weapon. For the same reason Tookee, who drew the second longest lot, chose the sword, which was of native manufacture. The lasso only remained for Tehee, and he had never used one in his life. They were to encounter the gorilla one after the other.

Tookee, who was himself of royal blood, entered the arena determined not to give his cruel kinsman Pip the extra pleasure of seeing him quail. He rushed straight towards the gorilla's cage, which was not yet opened, evidently hoping to gain an advantage before the brute could get out. But the door was pulled up from above a moment too soon for the brave Tookee, and the huge ape bounded into the open arena, beating an echoing note of defiance upon his ample bosom. The undaunted chief lunged swiftly at the creature's heart with such force that the worthless blade, encountering a rib, snapped in two. One crushing blow on the forehead from his enemy, and Tookee had died like a warrior of Lotoli.

Hooke had been dragged into the rebellion against his will and had vainly begged the king to pardon him on that ground. However, he entered the lists with some appearance of courage and brandishing his assegai. But the fate of his friend had unmanned him a little and destroyed his trust in his weapon. When the hideous brute re-

newed his deep, angry roar, Hookee trembled and fled, prodding blindly behind him at his pursuer. But Hookee might as well have tried to check a tornado with a paper fan. In a moment the gorilla had broken the spear's shaft. In another moment he had felled Hookee with a blow which was less effective than the one which finished poor Tookee only because the latter chief had been advancing gamely against the stroke, while Hookee was running away from it as fast as his legs would carry him. "He who fights and runs away may live to fight another day."

Before the gorilla had time to make a sure end of his motionless foe, Tehee bounded from the prisoner's door with the agility of a harlequin and waved his hand gracefully to the audience. He carried no lasso, and was armed only with an inspiration. His supple frame glistened in the sun, having been freshly anointed and his new purple bathing-drawers struck some of the spectators as showing too frivolous a regard for style in one about to die. But the medicine-man who had made the prophecy in the morning muttered "Mumbo", which afterwards increased his credit very much; for "mumbo" was a learned word, unknown to the Lotolies and which, as *afterwards* interpreted by the soothsayer himself, meant "appropriate." It was in fact a cabalistic term whose meaning varied a good deal according to circumstances, making it quite handy for an anti-vernacular, highly oracular, feather-his-nest old man.

Tehee answered the ape's angry challenge with a loud and defiant Ethiopian chuckle, as the man and his deformed image rushed swiftly at each other. Not a woman there but trembled and prayed for the graceful and intrepid Tehee. At the decisive moment that active chieftain projected himself into the air, in a horizontal posture and headforemost, as a swimmer takes a header into the water off a spring-board. In fact he converted himself into a human missile. His head flew safely through the terrible arms of his surprised antagonist and

struck the gorilla full butt just under the breast bone. The great ape fell without a groan, not because he felt no pain, but because he had not a single breath left in his body. His mighty right hand, which had fractured Tookee's skull, came down on Tehee only in a tremendous spank, so that it broke no bones, if it did detract somewhat from the glory of the victory and remind the victor unpleasantly of his nursery days.

At this point in the proceedings Hooke opened both eyes. He had half-opened one a few seconds earlier, but, the contest being then undecided, he had closed it again and resumed his judicious inaction. Now he sprang fearlessly to his feet, and, picking up the head of his broken assegai, buried it in the neck of the fallen gorilla. Then he looked proudly and victoriously around the audience.

"Stand against the wall," shouted Tehee to his posing comrade.

No sooner had Hooke wonderingly obeyed this mandate than the aspiring Tehee bounded on his shoulders and, grasping the top of the wall, drew himself up out of the arena. He snatched a sword from the captain of Pip's body-guard and dealt a death-blow to that cruel King. Then he seated himself upon the throne and nominated a friend of his own captain of the guard.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

So thought the medicine-man. Before the soldiers had decided how to act he started to his feet:

"Tehee hath overcome the gorilla with the national weapon," he cried, "and he shall die a King. The *head* is the national weapon of the African and of the ram. Long live the great King Tehee!"

"Long live King Tehee!" echoed the late Pip's Carolinian interpreter; and in his enthusiasm, forgetting he no longer wore such an article, he raised his hand to toss his hat into the air. He chucked

up a wisp of his wool instead, and the expression of his face was not blissful when he felt his mistake. A few minutes later he was arrested on a charge of tearing his hair in spite and mortification at the change of dynasties; and he lost his valuable post of interpreter in consequence.

"Long live Tehee!" shouted the spectators with one accord dazed at his audacity.

"Your Majesty will remember that I said 'Mumbo,' that is to say, 'fit and meet'—the moment I saw your Majesty enter the arena clad in purple, which is the royal color."

"We shall not forget it," answered King Tehee; "and we herewith appoint you our Prime Minister. The design of your seal of office shall be a serpent embracing an owl with the motto 'Mumbo,' which, I believe, means 'fit and meet.'"

Tehee was not ungrateful, but he *was* a wee bit satirical.

There was one incident of the revolution at Lotoli that I did not choose to look at. The starving cannibals who had been forced to witness Pip's dining were uncaged and, after kissing the feet of their liberator, were allowed to eat their tormentor, Pip. Old Mumbo said this was poetic justice, but I could not see the poetical part of it myself.

* * * * *

Next morning the gallant Tookie was buried with great pomp, Tehee himself being the chief mourner.

"He was a splendid fellow," sighed Hooke, strutting home from the funeral with the mien of a hero; "but he wanted discretion or he might have lived to see the glorious victory that WE won."

XV.

A POOR IMITATION.

HASTY imitation is risky, observed the Major to Bob, whose ears had been boxed that morning for mimicking, in front of the French teacher, a grimace which Bill had been making safely behind the back of that fiery foreigner. It was rather hard lines for Bob: he was only mimicking Bill, while Bill, who escaped, was mimicking the teacher. Bill, indeed, had bravely hastened to take the blame; but Bob had already taken the box, for the Frenchman was impulsive.

"So it is, uncle," assented Bob. "Do you know that the baby poked the fire to-day with your new walking-stick? The little beggar had just seen me raking the ashes with the poker."

"You recollect Barnum's monkey," chimed in Bill, "which saw the cook plucking a chicken and then went and plucked every feather out of his master's pet parrot—which led the bare bird to observe ironically, on Barnum's return, 'We've been having quite a lively time.'"

According to my recollection of the story, said the Major, you have garbled your quotation from the parrot, as compilers sometimes garble hymns, in the interests of orthodoxy. Anyhow I was only alluding to the risk of rash imitation *to the imitator himself*, as in Bob's case; and I was going to illustrate my remark by a little incident.

I had a large nondescript dog, named Growler, having, I fancy, a slight strain of two or three fierce breeds. Growler had a bad habit of worrying cattle. It particularly pleased him to secure a hold upon

the tail of an ill-tempered bull, belonging to a neighbor, and to take a long ride, or rather a long swing. It was almost impossible to call Growler away from his malicious pastime; and, not being a *chulo* or a *matador*, I shrunk from taking any part in a bull-fight, especially on the side of a bull that might possibly misinterpret my kindness. Before I managed to reform Growler by flogging administered after his offences, I witnessed several encounters which I was powerless to stop. On these occasions the bull exhausted all the antics of impotent rage. He flounced around, he pawed the ground, he bellowed, he even horned the hedge. He once shook off Growler by rolling, and once by dashing him against a tree. But the dog promptly manœuvred for a fresh grip and, having regained his position, held it till his zest or his muscles gave out.

On one occasion there was another witness to the bull-baiting in the shape of a small cur dog. This little animal had been highly excited at the spectacle and thought it would be fine fun to play the same game. So one day it sneaked behind the bull, as the latter was sleepily chewing the cud, and fastened its teeth in his tail. But the bull's tail, though too weak to wag my large dog, was more than strong enough to wag this tiny cur. The muscular power, too, of the bull's caudal appendage had, thanks to Growler, been increased by repeated exercise. The powerful brute started to his feet and flicked his tail up with a jerk that sent the hapless cur flying high into the air, to be caught neatly on the horns of the animal he had reckoned upon worrying with impunity. After the second toss the little dog lit upon the safe side of the fence with an imperceptible tail and hardly breath enough to squeak.

It was his first and last game of pitch and toss. Head and tail—he had lost on each. The bull-dozed cur hobbled home on three legs, fully resolved never again to ape the amusements of aristocratic dogs until he could do the thing thoroughly.

XVI.

THE GRATEFUL CAT.

How do you think you'd like a little 'African hunting, Bill? asked the Major. You'd be old enough in a few years.

"I'm not particularly eager for adventures, uncle, I can assure you. I'm afraid I don't possess your presence of—imagination. Two men of resources would be too much to expect in one family, you know. On the whole, I'd rather stay safely at home with our tame cat than visit its wild relations in Africa."

But one is not always safe with a domestic cat, said the Major; I never was in greater danger than I was from my black cat, Buster.

"Why, Buster seems awfully fond of you!" cried Bill.

So he is now; and he has good reason to be. But two years ago——

"Story!" called Bill to little Bob, who had been reading.

Two years ago, went on the Major, I was obliged to shoot a strange dog which had shown signs of madness. The next morning, while I was in the stable taking a look at my nag, I heard a most unearthly catcall from an unoccupied stall. I knew Buster to be capable of a vast variety of tones, but I never expected such a grave-yard growl as that from him. But there he was, perched on the rack, glaring at

me with red eyes and posing for a spring. There was no mistaking his condition. He was mad—stark, raving mad.

Now, a rabid cat is an uglier customer than a rabid dog, on account of its greater agility and its claws. It seems nearly impossible to avoid a scratch in a battle with one, when a person has neither stick, nor knife, nor missile with him; and one scratch may be fatal. To try to throttle a mad cat would be suicidal, and to hit at it would be almost as dangerous. My only chance, I saw at a glance, lay in my skill in *catching*. If I could avoid Buster's spring, and grasp his tail from behind before he reached the ground, I should be master of the situation.

He did not keep me many seconds in suspense. "With one compound yell he burst, all claws, upon his foe." I dodged, and caught his tail. Then I whirled him round and round by that clawless member until he became quite familiar with the nature of centrifugal force. Of course he found it impossible to turn upon me. A cat can wag its tail but its tail can *not* wag a cat—as Dundreary observed about another quadruped. My only danger was that he might leave his tail behind and fly off like a slung shot and then attack me afresh. Even that, however, would give me a valuable start.

I had whirled him round for some minutes, and had passed through the stable door and out into the yard, before I had at all decided what to do with my captive. It is one thing to catch a Tartar and another thing to dispose of him. A glimpse of a pond which adorned my little place, however, settled his fate. Here was the very opportunity I had wanted, to try my cure for hydrophobia. I had always held, with other good temperance people, that, if you can only *force* any creature having an aversion to water to drink that healthy fluid, you are bound to cure him of his complaint. The difficulty, I knew was that the throats of rabid beings are said to contract at the sight or sound of water. But I reflected that Buster for some minutes had

been powerless to bite or scratch or even to miaul, in consequence of the rush of blood to his head. His position, in fact, had been sadly tantalizing—so near, and yet so far. The moment he was freed from this mortifying constraint, he would doubtless start a new series of squalls and bites. In these contortions of rage, I reasoned, he would swallow some water, if any rabid animal could.

With such beneficent intentions, I let him fly into the pond. My idea proved correct. He sank for a full minute, and then came up an altered being. The lurid light had left his eyes, and the light of other days had taken its place. He was rounder than before, and could not walk fast, and looked ashamed. But he was grateful, and rubbed himself against me.

Ever afterwards he has drunk nothing but water, and has never been known to hanker after forbidden dairy milk. Even when the cream has disappeared we never dream of suspecting Buster since his reformation. He is, in fact, the most amiable and docile cat. He jumps through my arms, stands on his hind legs, and pulls the bell rope when I tell him. He has even tried his best to help me in the feather business.

In what way?" asked Bill.

By killing your aunt's canaries and laying their bodies at my feet.

"Uncle," said little Bob reflectively, "*I* sometimes think of dodges when they are too late; but you are always ready with yours."

My motto is "*Toujours pret*," observed the Major.

"'*Toujours prate*,' you mean," said Bill.

"*Toujours pret*," persisted the unsuspecting Major: I fancied "*prete*" was feminine."

"So it is," said Bill; "but still I think '*Toujours prate*' might be a better motto for my respected uncle."

Oh, I see! laughed the Major, clapping with his thumb-nails. One for Bill—AT LAST!

XVII.

A SELFISH LITTLE NIGGER.

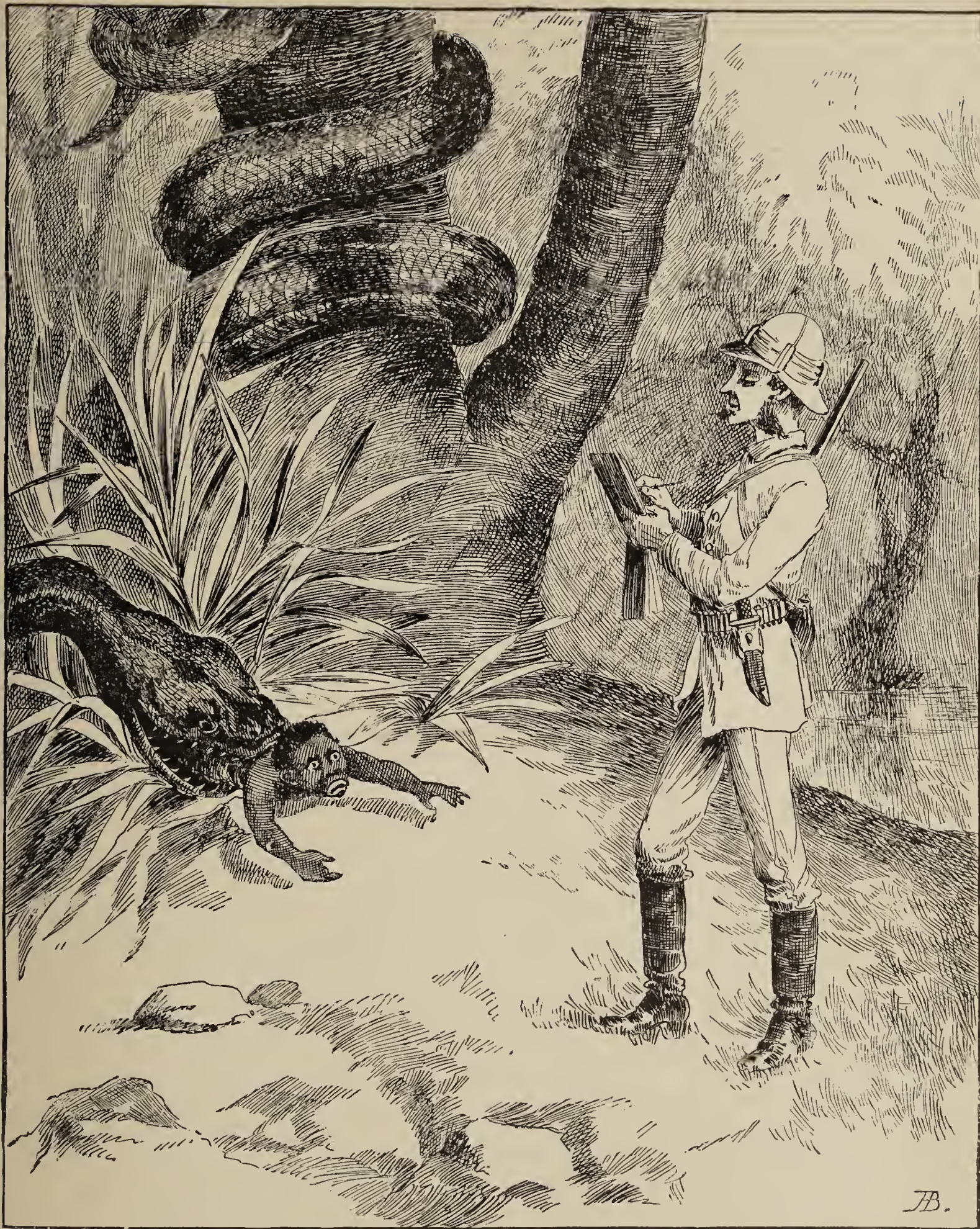
“**A**RE the stories we hear of big snakes founded on fact, Uncle?” asked Bob.

Why of course, you little villain. They are just as true as that I was twelve years in Africa.

“But I thought no such big snakes had been discovered, except in ancient times,” said Bill.

They may have been discovered lots of times, rejoined the Major, but they have a bad habit of swallowing their discoverers. In ancient times it was different, for, some big snakes having imprudently *swallowed men in armor and died of indigestion*, the rest were scared of eating human beings. To-day I believe serpents prefer negroes to us whites because we wear too much clothes; just as we prefer eating our oranges peeled. And this quite accounts for the fact that I have been able to *report* more first-class snakes than any of the negroes among whom I lived, though there is no telling how many big serpents they may have *discovered*.

I once came on a negro boy who had just had the misfortune of discovering a python. When I first saw him he had begun to explore the interior of the reptile. I had fancied serpents always crushed the bones of their prey; but this one had excused the little nigger this



INTERVIEWING THE FRIGHTENED DARKEY.

part of the performance, seeing he was so small and tender. The snake had commenced with his feet and had already got outside his legs when I came up. The little cuss wanted me to take him out at once; but I thought I would let him go down to his arm-pits at least, in the interests of science.

Besides, I was at the time African correspondent to "The Telegram" which the sarcastic newsboys called *The Tell-a-cram*. My correspondence had been declined by another American paper "The Daily News. The editor thought I was too fanciful or too realistic or not realistic enough (I quite forget which) for his journal, which diurnally treated its readers to the minute horrors of a true hanging and which the sarcastic newsboys called *The Daily Noose*. But I cherished no vindictive feelings against the "News." Indeed I generally carried some copies of it about me, as a safeguard against wild beasts. There were some things in the news columns of that paper that no living creature could swallow.

Here was a chance for an interview that might never occur again, and so I got out my note-book and invited the little Ethiopian to report his sensations at every stage of the proceedings. But the ugly young beggar wouldn't give me the first bit of information. He only shook and shook and roared and roared, and called out "Save me! Save me!"

I begged him to let me record his feelings for the benefit of education. I told him the doctors would like very much to know whether he was in much pain, and, if so, whether it became greater or less as he went further down. I tried to flatter him by saying that his remarks would appear in "The Telegram" and be read before the Zoological Society. But it was no use—the young scamp was too blamed selfish. He only went on, "Oh, save me, boss! Save me *now*!"

I explained to him that the python was already half torpid and that, as it could not possibly bite *me*, I could cut it in two whenever

I chose. But he never heeded or stopped his cries :—" Save me *now*, boss. Do !"

Finding a certain sameness about these remarks of his, I cut the interview and the snake short at once. As I bisected the reptile, it gave the youngster an extra squeeze and ran its fangs into him ; but he soon recovered from the injury and felt better than he ever did in his life.

In fact the little coward never had the chills afterwards. He shivered so much when he was inside the snake that he shook out all the shakes that were in his system.

XVIII.

A BOVINE INNOVATOR.

" And thereby hangs a tale. "—SHAKESPEARE.

I WAS fairly parched with thirst as I reached the top of a sandy ridge and saw with delight a stream winding through an expanse of luxuriant vegetation. Stately palms stood singly or in small clusters, the papyrus floated on the bosom of a lakelet close by, and every here and there between me and the horizon a tall tamarind or a huge baobab dwarfed the neighboring laburnums and cassavas. Never had an oasis burst so suddenly on my sight. On one side of the ridge was a desert, on the other a paradise.

My horse was not so tired as I was. He had managed to drink the last water we found, which had been a little too brackish for me, So he carried me at an easy gallop to the borders of the fertile tract. A broad and very regular trail, as if made by the feet of many animals, appeared to encircle the oasis.

While I was wondering at this, I heard a monosyllabic sound on the right, then another on the left, then faint echoes in the distance, as if some curious watchword were being passed along a line of sentries posted at long intervals on either side.

The challenge on the right sounded like "Boo"—the answer on the left like "Moo." Two buffaloes now came in view, cantering along the trodden track from either side, and I fancied I saw others some hundred yards or so behind these. The first two came on without pause or hesitation. I never had seen such presumption on the part of a buffalo before; and not liking it now that I did see it, I raised my double-barreled rifle and bowled them over one after the other.

I had scarcely reloaded when a second pair of buffaloes galloped up and I was forced to give them a similar salute. Then a third brace charged, and I repeated the dose. Others were visible behind them at regular intervals. The thing, though curious, was threatening to become monotonous.

But the "moo" which had passed along the line of outposts had finally reached the reserve force: and now a dense herd of beasts swept down the slope in front of me. A large bull brought up the rear, and now and then a commanding bellow issued from his throat; but his forces maintained the strictest silence. There was quite a variety of tone in his "boos." Sometimes they seemed to cheer or request, sometimes to warn or threaten.

But what surprised me most was that the buffalo commander appeared to carry the mark of supremacy *on his tail*. At all events there was a long extension to that supple section of his body, thinner and more pliant than the tail itself. It was both useful and ornamental. It streamed like a royal standard from the upraised tail of its possessor; and it descended like a herdsman's whip on stragglers.

But these observations are slightly premature, being based chiefly on what I saw at much closer quarters.

Gazing on this very odd spectacle, I had quite forgot the single buffaloes advancing on my right and left flank. They were within a few feet of me on either side when a sudden bound of my horse barely saved me from this pressing danger. The two bulls had no time to check their rash career, and came full butt upon each other with a loud crash. As they dropped to earth, each cast at his fellow a look of reproach, such as Cæsar cast at Brutus when he felt his friend's dagger; and the dying "moo" of each seemed to express the sentiment, "You, too, you brute!"

Unchecked by the fate of their comrades, the other animals still advanced on both flanks—with better discipline than judgment, for they were bound to fall singly so long as they were unsupported and my ammunition held out. Several more had fallen before the charge of the main herd called imperatively for my attention. It looked like the shadow of a dark cloud crossing the plain, and the front rank was now barely a hundred yards off.

I had often seen a stampede of American bisons, and I admit that their shaggy manes, tossing in the wind, make them look more imposing. But the bisons' course was always away from the hunter, not towards him, which decidedly lessens the terrors of the situation. Besides, the impressiveness of those spectacles was further decreased by the little circumstance that I had only seen them in pictures.

But these buffaloes were mooing and moving creatures; not a mere herd either, but a regiment, obeying a despot who urged his braves on to glory by frequent applications of the puzzling article upon his tail.

I gazed on and on, trying to solve the mystery of that appendage. It looked thick for a whip and narrow for a flag. At last I hit it, as I fancied. It was a single stripe with a lonely star at the end—a fit-

ting standard for the *first* State in the Union of Independent Buffaloes.

As the forest of horns approached nearer, I boldly determined not to stir an inch *from where I sat!* If my horse fled, that would be his weakness, not mine; I merely let the reins fall upon his neck, which led him to suppose that I would not mind it very much if he *did* play the coward. But, of course, I am not responsible for the inferences of a quadruped.

The dastardly animal did carry me off safely, but not before the herd was unpleasantly close, so close that I was able to identify the boss buffalo *and the bit of rope on his tail!*

Yes, this bovine chief was only Bumbo, my runaway domestic buffalo. He had always been of a dodgy and aspiring character, but it was as much by chance as by smartness that he gained his high position in the herd. When he ran away his driver had tried to lasso him; but the lasso had fallen short and only caught the beast's upraised tail. At the first strain the rope snapped, just behind a knot by which two separate pieces had been patched together. So Bumbo got away with the seeming *encumbrance* of a notted extension of his tail.

Now Bumbo was not the kind of buffalo to kick against the inevitable, but rather to try and make the best of everything. The extension had its drawbacks, sometimes (until he learned to look out for these dangers) catching in brambles and pulling him down on his haunches. But he soon discovered its uses, too. After half an hour's journey he was assaulted by a wild buffalo, who scorned and scoffed at the rope on Bumbo's tail, which by the by, Bumbo at first carried trailing along the ground in a way that was far from stylish. To the untamed beast it seemed a badge of slavery.

Hardly, however, had the foreheads of the two joined in battle when the wild bull felt a sharp pain *behind*. Glancing round to

see his new enemy, he exposed his left side to Bumbo, who planted his sharp horns beneath the foreleg of the foe and laid him, wounded, in the dust. It was Bumbo's despised appendage—which he had knowingly flicked round to the enemy's flank—that caused this diversion in his favor and won him an easy victory.

Bumbo knew a good thing when he saw it. He followed the beaten buffalo to its herd. He challenged and defeated the strongest bulls in it by the aid of his artificial tail. Standing on the defensive at first, he would bring it into play at what invariably proved to be the turning point of the struggle. It is disastrous for a buffalo to change front in presence of the enemy.

The adventurous Bumbo resolved to make a full use of the only artificial weapon ever owned by a buffalo. He practised with it until he could flick a tsetse fly off a friend's back three yards away. He went on practising until he made it an effectual means of repression; until in fact it served him to point a moral as well as to adorn his tail.

Vast schemes of ambition now filled his mind. He would use his extension as a herder's whip to discipline his buffaloes. He would introduce something like a human system. He would choose and hold a grassy territory for his kind. He would mark the confines of the land of Moo, guard them by patrols, and organize a state militia. His subjects should have no fear and own no master save himself.

The strength and numbers of the buffaloes, aided by organization, kept this land of Moo safe and inviolate from every beast of the desert. Only creatures of other elements trespassed with impunity on the domains of Bumbo. The great crocodile lifted his snout and roared or grunted as of yore, and vultures still scented carcasses and flocked from invisible heights to devour them. Bumbo, like a wise ruler, did not show his weakness by resenting the presence of intruders whom

he could not reach. On the contrary, he pretended to welcome them and proclaimed them royal scavengers.

“How did you find out all this, uncle?”

A very natural question indeed, my dear Bill, said the Major. A native happened to have witnessed the first battle of Bumbo after his escape from his driver, and I inferred the rest from my own observation; for I thought it quite worth while to spend a few days in a padded buffalo's skin, studying the manners and customs of Moo. I got off working with the other buffaloes by being lame; but it was work enough pretending to chew the cud for hours at a stretch. A few of the beasts seemed disposed to be sociable and “mooed” kindly in my ears, probably inquiring after my health. But they hardly expected an answer: I looked a sick and shrivelled buffalo, not fit to say boo to a goose.

Whether the semi-civilized buffaloes of Moo would have introduced other modern improvements, and whether the aspiring Bumbo would have rested content with defending his kingdom without enlarging it, would be interesting to know. But I considered it dangerous to wait and see. Here were beasts encroaching on the aristocracy of man, and uniting his superior system with their superior strength. The spread of education among cattle would unfit them for humble toil. There were strikers enough already in the world, I thought. What would become of us, if horses and oxen should begin to waste their time on aspirations and cheap literature, and to join trades-unions and secret societies?

Such a reform had to be nipped in the bud; and I soon returned with an army of a hundred negroes and two Gatling guns. We slew old Bumbo and routed his host. I was sorry it had to be done, for this Peter the Great of buffaloes made a gallant resistance.

I had made preparations to combine profit with philanthropy, and canned nearly half a million pounds of pressed beef upon the spot.

XIX.

MISGUIDED BY EXPERIENCE.

I ONCE started for a certain inland village with a load of mirrors to barter for ostrich feathers. The idea seemed a promising one, for on my last trip a rich negro had given me a very high price for my pocket looking-glass, and I had always found Africans as vain of their style of beauty as we are of ours. Yet I was doomed to return featherless and mirrorless.

The very last day of our journey we encountered a simoom, to describe which would make my story too long. I swallowed enough sand to satisfy an ostrich, and pecks of dust got underneath the cover of the wagon and overlaid the mirrors. We had to halt at a river to polish our goods and wash ourselves before entering the Buctoo village to which we were journeying.

We ranged the mirrors along the bank, and, wading into the stream, dashed water over them. While I was thus washing the large toilet glass which I designed for the Buctoo chief, one of my negroes—who was a very undemonstrative man—stopped working and gazed fixedly at me.

“What are you gaping at?” I cried.

He pointed calmly at my legs.

A large crocodile had swum noiselessly behind me and was at that moment opening his snout with a view to amputating one of my nether limbs. I started to one side, but I was too late. The water retarded my flight, and, besides, Leviathan is not such a slow or unwieldy creature as he appears to be. In a few seconds the brute's

long jaws protruded before me, one on each side of my right leg. I saw them closing on the endangered limb. Then I saw them opening with a jerk; and to my amazement the beast rushed furiously at the largest mirror.

He had seen what he thought a strange crocodile catching a man on the bank of his own river. This bold poaching on his preserves could not be allowed for an instant. The defiant trespasser on his domain had to be chastised. Such encroachments on his riparian rights should be nipped in the bud, if he knew how—and he rather guessed he did. Though he had barely made his mark on me, yet business had to be attended to before pleasure. Besides, he objected to violent exercise after meals. Hence my reprieve.

He crunched the mirror into small bits, and then smiled for a moment, fondly imagining that he had swallowed his vanished antagonist in the shortest time yet reported. But catching sight of the fancied intruder in another glass, he charged at it, more furious than before. He smashed all my glasses before he stopped, except one. This was a mirror that magnified and distorted objects. I brought it thinking some one of the Buctoos might have a taste for caricatures and give an extra price for it. In this glass the crocodile saw his own open jaws much larger than life, and his own hideousness increased tenfold; and he sensibly concluded not to tackle any such reptile as that.

Flopping back into the river in dismay, he saw me standing on the bank at a safe distance. Then he sorrowed vainly over his lost opportunity. He had abandoned a substance for a shadow, and could not avoid musing desolately on what might have been.

I could hardly believe at first that my leg was on my body, much less that it was only slightly scratched. Indeed I had begun to hop away on my left foot, and had not attempted to use my right leg at all until the shallow water through which I was hopping tripped me

up. However, the very moment I was out of danger I proved conclusively that the limb was quite sound and strong, by kicking the undemonstrative nigger who had stared at the crocodile coming to eat me, as quietly as he would have stared at a wild beast feeding in a cage.

As the negroes turned our lightened wagon homewards, I cocked my gun and looked revengefully towards the reptile that had destroyed my goods. He was floating despondently down the stream, quite regardless of another crocodile which was swimming fiercely at him.

“No more fights with phantoms for me to-day,” thought the dazed and disheartened animal.

And while he was thus musing, his enemy (who was a sad reality) secured a deadly grip upon him, and took him down to his quiet dining-room at the bottom of the river.

XX.

AN ENDLESS CHASE.

“WHY does a dog run round after his tail when you hit it with a stone, Uncle?” asked little Bob.

Generally, said the Major, I fancy it is to bite the fly that has bitten him, as he imagines. In the case of a sane dog with a short tail the motive, of course, can only be idle curiosity—to see *what* insect has hurt him.

“A bee or not a bee? that is the question, perhaps in the dog’s mind,” suggested Bill.

Other animals have the same habits, said Major Mendax, as I once discovered much to my disadvantage.

The deer in our neighborhood had been thinned by a series of hunting expeditions, and wild beasts, being short of prey, sometimes came right up to our trading settlement. One day a large striped hyena, made bold by hunger, attacked me on a lonely path. I was walking home from a friend’s house, and, fearing no danger by broad daylight in a settled district, I was quite unarmed. There was no tree nearer than my own garden, which was fully three hundred yards away, and I was bound to be overtaken before I got there.

To make matters apparently worse, I stepped on a small round stone, and stumbled. When I had recovered my upright position the hyena was only a few yards from me, snarling like an angry dog. Instinctively I picked up the little stone and threw it. It just missed his head, but it hit his tail plump. He turned round with a jerk, and

snapped at his tail, and, failing to catch it, waltzed fiercely after it, to the music of his growls.

I did not care the least whether his head or tail won the race. "Heads I win, tails you lose, old fellow," I thought as I was running home.

"I suppose he went on running after his tail while you ran three hundred yards," drawled Bill, ironically.

You are a little hasty in drawing your conclusions, my young man, said the Major. The beast realized his error after a few dozen turns, and before I had run fifty yards. But he was groggy and giddy then. His head felt queer and so did his stomach; and his movements grew like those of a landsman pacing the deck of a rolling steamer. After a few erratic steps he abandoned the chase, for his nose, etc., turned up at the very idea of food. Then the sickly animal dropt on his haunches, and sent forth sounds of distress that reminded me unpleasantly of a passenger imploring a slow steward to make haste.

The people who couldn't find the morals in my former tales perhaps couldn't see the great truth that underlies this story either, if I did not write it on a blackboard or print it in large type. It is this:
**THE CHASE OF AN IGNOBLE END MAY PROVE AN
ENDLESS CHASE.**

XXI.

A DERIVATION OR TWO.

“ I HAVE known several other curiously fitting names,” observed a disagreeable guest in the middle of an after-dinner chat. “ In the last war between Russia and Turkey, Admiral Popoff was very appropriately placed in charge of the torpedo defences in the Black Sea. And——”

No doubt, said the Major, you have noticed the double appropriateness in the name of Robinson Crusoe’s man Friday—because he was rescued on the sixth day of the week, and was so very nearly fried, eh ?

“ By the bye,” asked the interrupted philologist in an ominously genial tone, “ what is the origin of your own surname, *Mendax* ? ”

When I was a small boy, answered the Major, I carried a hatchet, like truthful little George, and I never denied cutting a cherry tree. I suppose my ancestors had a similar leaning toward hatchets, which would account for our family name and—veracity.

It is true that my brother, after he struck oil and “ located ” in Fifth Avenue, adopted a spliced battle-axe at his crest, and traced us back to a bloodthirsty Warrior, who mended a broken axe during the battle of Hastings, and performed prodigies of valor with the repaired weapon. And in this way brother is fully sustained by the heralds, who have made him out a very pretty pedigree. But the

inventiveness of a herald, I suppose, is sometimes freshened by a check. For my part, anyhow, I prefer the humble hatchet of peace—and truth—to the ensanguined axe of war—and heraldry.

But in either case, you see, an axe is at the root of our genealogical tree, though we have dropped the final aristocratic e.

“ But take off the last ‘ aristocratic e, ’ ” said his rude acquaintance, “ and your name means something very different in Latin—having no connection whatever with an axe or a hatchet, either.”

But I am not a Latin, retorted the Major, and have no connection whatever with that race; and besides, any Latin scholar can tell you that *Mendax* is a *false* derivation for my name.

“ Then perhaps ” pursued the disagreeable guest, “ the name was first assumed in prophetic anticipation of the ‘ hatchet throwing ’ of some mendacious descendant.”

XXII.

HOW HE GOT HIS RANK.

“**W**ERE you a major in the army?” asked the same disagreeable guest.

No, said the Major.

“Or in the militia?”

No.

“Or in the volunteers?”

No, my inquisitive friend, nor in the marines either, replied the Major. I got my title before I left America. I won it in a Western store, the resort of men skilled with the pistol and the long bow. In the winter evenings they chiefly displayed their skill with the latter arm. A friendly rivalry sprang up among these gifted men. And so one evening they agreed to organize a corps on the competitive system. This occurred, as luck would have it, on the only evening that I ventured timorously among these redoubted Western romancists. Each competitor—there being ten entries—was to have one shot. He who fired highest, or in other words told the tallest story, was to be Colonel; the next, Major; the two next, Captains; the next, Doctor; the four next, Lieutenants. The loser was to be dubbed Private and to “pay the shot”. It had been proposed to have two Privates, but this was voted down: it was too large a proportion of men to officers to suit in that portion of the United States. As it was, our one Private cloaked his humble military rank under the civilian title of Professor; and two of our Lieutenants promoted themselves.

The "boys" "spread themselves" on the evening of the competition, and most of them were said to have beaten their record. Even the Private's story was so tall that the storekeeper, proud of entertaining so much genius, refused to take anybody's money, and insisted upon "setting them up" himself. But I was a stranger, and the boys out of mere hospitality voted my narrative the second best and saluted me as "Major"; and the title has stuck to me ever since.

"Won't you let *us* hear your narrative, Major?" asked another guest.

It was not exactly original, said the Major—modesty prevented my offering any concoction of my own to such a company. It was an ingenious slander invented by a teetotal blue-nose deacon who was far too pious a man to smile while he was telling it to me—for the day was Sunday.

"The 'Colonel's' story must have been something worth hearing," observed the disagreeable guest.

I calculate it was, said the Major.

"How is it that so great a genius is unknown to fame?"

Well, you see, that story finished him. Men are never satisfied. Another evening, I believe, he tried to add something to it, and it choked him.

"Would you mind telling us the Colonel's story?" asked the disagreeable guest.

Do you want me to choke too? said the Major indignantly. If I do sometimes tell stories, I always draw the line at falsehoods!

"I must admit," said his unpleasant acquaintance with an amiable smile, "that you do confine yourself pretty strictly to one side of the line."

XXIII.

THE BOTTLE INSURANCE CO. (UNLIMITED).

“**Y**OU didn’t have too much money when you started for Africa—eh, Major Mendax?” asked the same objectionable friend next day, winking at some men whom he had invited to meet the Major.

Only a few dollars, after taking my passage for Lisbon.

“And how did you manage then, to start your feather business, Major?”

Oh, I started a syndicate, answered the Major, and the syndicate started me.

Besides, he resumed, after a moment’s reflection, I was not nearly so poor when I disembarked as when I embarked. I had got myself appointed agent for an insurance company that allowed its policy holders to travel wherever they liked. This company permitted me to keep a percentage of the premiums paid me. It had occurred to me long ago that there were great and neglected opportunities for securing new policies on board ocean steamers. The uncertainty of human life is so painfully apparent to landsmen in a rising sea. Besides, an agent, I thought, could win the sympathies and confidence of timorous passengers by divers small attentions and cheerful words; and then there are sickly moments when people would gladly pay a premium to be let alone.

There were some thirty saloon passengers, besides myself, on board the SS. Three Kings. Among these was an unusually fat New

England merchant, a man of substance in every sense. Before we had left the harbor I began considerably suggesting remedies for sea-sickness.

“Don’t *think* of it, my dear sir,” said I, “and you will never have it. That’s certain. Some silly people fancy every queer sensation must be nausea. Now a queer sensation may be caused by the smell of the ship, by depression of spirits at leaving home, or by mere nervousness. You may possibly feel a strange feeling yourself.”

He had not seemed particularly cheered by the conversation. Though he took no notice of my last suggestion, yet a moment afterwards he drew from his pocket what I thought to be a flask and applied it to what I thought to be his mouth.

“I’m mighty fond of smelling salts, mister,” he said, unguardedly smacking his lips.

“So am I, very,” I exclaimed. “Please give us a smell.”

“I regret to say, stranger, that the perfume has kind of evanesced.”

“I am sorry for that, for it smelled good—I like it preserved in rye. As I was saying before,” I went on, “if you do feel at all queer, you have only to keep your spirits up—”

“The trouble is to keep them down,” he said to himself, as I guessed from the character of his smile—his faint and final smile.

“And be a little particular about your diet,” I continued. “If I were you, “I would not eat fat pork, or suet-dumpling, or sausages, or plum-pudding, or marrow, or—”

He evidently had not needed my friendly warning against these edibles, for their mere mention seemed distasteful to him, and he left me abruptly before I had nearly ended my prohibited list, or *index expurgatorius*.

I found my truant some minutes later, lying on the hurricane-deck, “feeling a little uneasy,” he admitted now.

I lay down beside him.

At this touching mark of sympathy he groaned.

“Are you not afraid of catching cold?” he asked.

“The good Samaritan never thought about catching cold,” I said, smiling benevolently. “I trust you don’t think me too selfish to run some little risk to soothe a suffering fellow-creature. It struck me that I might set your mind at ease and that mental repose might be a solace, if not an antidote, to bodily sickness. If you felt that you had done your duty, that you had left no wife or children uninsured against—”

“I have no relations,” he murmured.

“Still a policy for fifty thousand dollars in favor of some deserving charity could hardly fail to comfort you.”

“I have willed all my fortune to charities.”

This might have discouraged an ordinary man, but I was an insurance agent. “But there is the President of the United States,” I persisted, “ruining himself in dispensing our country’s hospitalities on a wretched \$50,000 a year. And sinking afterwards into a poverty as honorable to himself as it is dishonorable to the public. What a noble work to provide a retiring pension for the Fathers of one’s Country, and to rebuke our national penuriousness in this matter. A trifling payment of \$1000 a year, beginning now—”

“Are you an insurance agent?” he gasped, in the tone of little Red Riding-hood asking her acting grandmamma if he was a wolf.

I owned the soft impeachment.

“Here is the \$1000—draw me out a policy.”

“In whose favor?” I inquired.

“In anybody’s: in your own, if you will only leave me.”

“For the President of the United States,” I said proudly, “I scorn to profit from my benevolence towards an afflicted fellow-man to the extent of a single cent—beyond my usual commission.”

I regret to say that the policy which I there and then drew out

lapsed the very next year from non-payment of the premium, and that the ex-Presidents have continued unprovided for ever since.

Among the passengers was a white-tied exhorter. He was not an ordained minister but he represented that he represented a certain missionary society, which society, he constantly reminded us, was in urgent need of funds. He was one of those people who are always worried about their neighbor's faults and never worried about their own. He was fond of singing hymns loudly and nasally at the piano in the saloon, especially when two worldlings were playing backgammon, a game which he strongly denounced because it involved the use of dice. I offered to give this apostle one dollar, after I had examined his vouchers as a collecting agent for the society; but he never came to me for the subscription.

A few evenings before I made that offer, the quasi-reverend gentleman gave the passengers a rousing address upon the sad state of unconverted negroes. He ended by commenting upon the uncertainty of our life, which he illustrated by some borrowed similes and some alarming sea stories which were undoubtedly original. He urged us to lay up lasting riches by subscribing to African missions.

He seemed about pass to his hat round when I grasped his extended hand.

"On behalf of your hearers," I said, "I thank you, sir, for the impressive picture you have drawn of the precariousness of human existence. And I sincerely hope and trust that all persons present will take the obvious moral, and insure their lives."

But the audience dispersed. I cannot tell whether they were afraid of him or of me, or whether they took my remarks for the benediction; but the way they scattered was quite disheartening. For some days after this incident the weather was calm and business dull. At last the glass fell, the wind rose, and I doubled my attentions to a certain middle-aged widow who was supposed to be comfortably off.

“Is there any danger?” she asked, as the breeze freshened.

“None at present, madam; but it is always well to be prepared I presume your children are provided for?”

“I have none,” she sighed; and I echoed her sigh, for children are the best arguments for insurance men.

I went sadly away to my stateroom, leaving her sitting by the bulwarks and holding on to them. My barometer, I found, was rising slightly, although the sea as yet showed no signs of abating. Putting certain articles in my pocket, I returned to the widow as a forlorn hope. Even childless, she seemed the most promising passenger on deck.

“Oh,” she cried, grasping my arm as the steamer shipped a few bucketfuls of water forwards; “I’m sure we are going down.”

“Not so bad as that. I expect the breeze will die out before midnight.”

“Oh, I shall never sleep in this *awful storm*.”

“When one’s mind is at peace, one’s body can rest under the most untoward circumstances.”

“I have forgiven all my enemies,” she observed.

“But is there no one you have injured yourself, madam?”

“Only a girl who was once engaged to my late husband; if it was an injury to supplant her.”

“Would not an insurance policy on your life, drawn in her favor, make you feel more at ease?”

“How could a policy written now reach her, if anything happened to the ship?”

“Do you see these bottles?” said I, taking a crimson bottle from each pocket. “They are conspicuous, you observe, and can be seen far away at sea. I would enclose a copy of the policy in each. To cork and launch them would be my last official act on board.

“Weeks after we had gone to pieces your peace-offering would be

wafted on the waves to her whom you supplanted. The Bottle Insurance Company, I am proud to say, has never yet failed to take up its floating obligations."

A policy was written, and the premium paid. The widow went to sleep at peace with all the world, but woke next morning in a less enviable frame of mind, for it was calm and she seemed out of humor with herself and me.

She actually wanted me to alter the life-policy in favor of her unsuccessful rival into an endowment policy in her own favor.

XXIV.

THE MAJOR'S BRIDGE.

"WE haven't heard a story for a week," cried Bob, who had been staying with his cousins.

And it may be many weeks before you hear another from me," said the Major, "for I am off to-morrow.

"Well, Uncle," said Bill, "we both hope you may be back sooner than you expect, and that meantime you will not expose yourself to such terrific dangers as you faced in Africa. And now we are all attention for the valedictory."

Seating himself, the Major began:

It was during the season when I was using chromos as a means of barter, and my wagon was loaded with them. Being in want of game, I had left my wagon and servants by a stream whose course I continued to follow for fear of losing myself. Before long I started two fine birds like pheasants, and brought down one with each barrel of my fowling-piece.

The ground was pretty open, but I had not seen a lioness which

was suckling two infant cubs at some distance, though on the same side of the river as myself. I had reloaded both barrels with powder and was about to add the shot when the beast, excited by my first fire and fearing for her little ones, roared and charged. As I had no bullets with me, I made for the river. To my dismay I perceived that the stream just here formed a rapid which ended in a cataract. To plunge in seemed sure destruction. How to die seemed to be the only question for me to decide.

And to embarrass my choice, by offering me yet another short route to eternity, a huge tree snake that was coiling around the branches of a sycamore on the farther bank fixed his wicked eye most significantly upon me.

A single palm grew near me. It was slim and straight and had no branch within many feet of the ground. There was nothing left for me except to try and "swarm" up the stem. But I had barely dropped my gun and embraced the trunk when the snake folded his tail securely round a high branch of the sycamore and let his head fall nearly to the ground. His long body swung twice like an elastic pendulum before it had acquired enough momentum. In the third swing his body became horizontal and spanned the stream; and his huge jaws grasped a branch of the palm firmly. His next move would be to let go with his tail, which would then drop over to my side of the stream. But I had time enough to prepare and no time to hesitate.

It struck me that I had better ammunition with me than bullets, for this kind of game. My pocket was nearly full of picture nails, fellows with big brass heads for hanging up the chromos. Just as the snake connected the palm and the sycamore by his huge body, I was putting a long nail, head foremost, into each barrel. The heads fitted the bore of my gun as if they had been manufactured for it.

Before the serpent could uncoil his tail I fired and nailed it to the

sycamore. Before he could open his mouth, bang went my second barrel and nailed his under jaw to the palm.

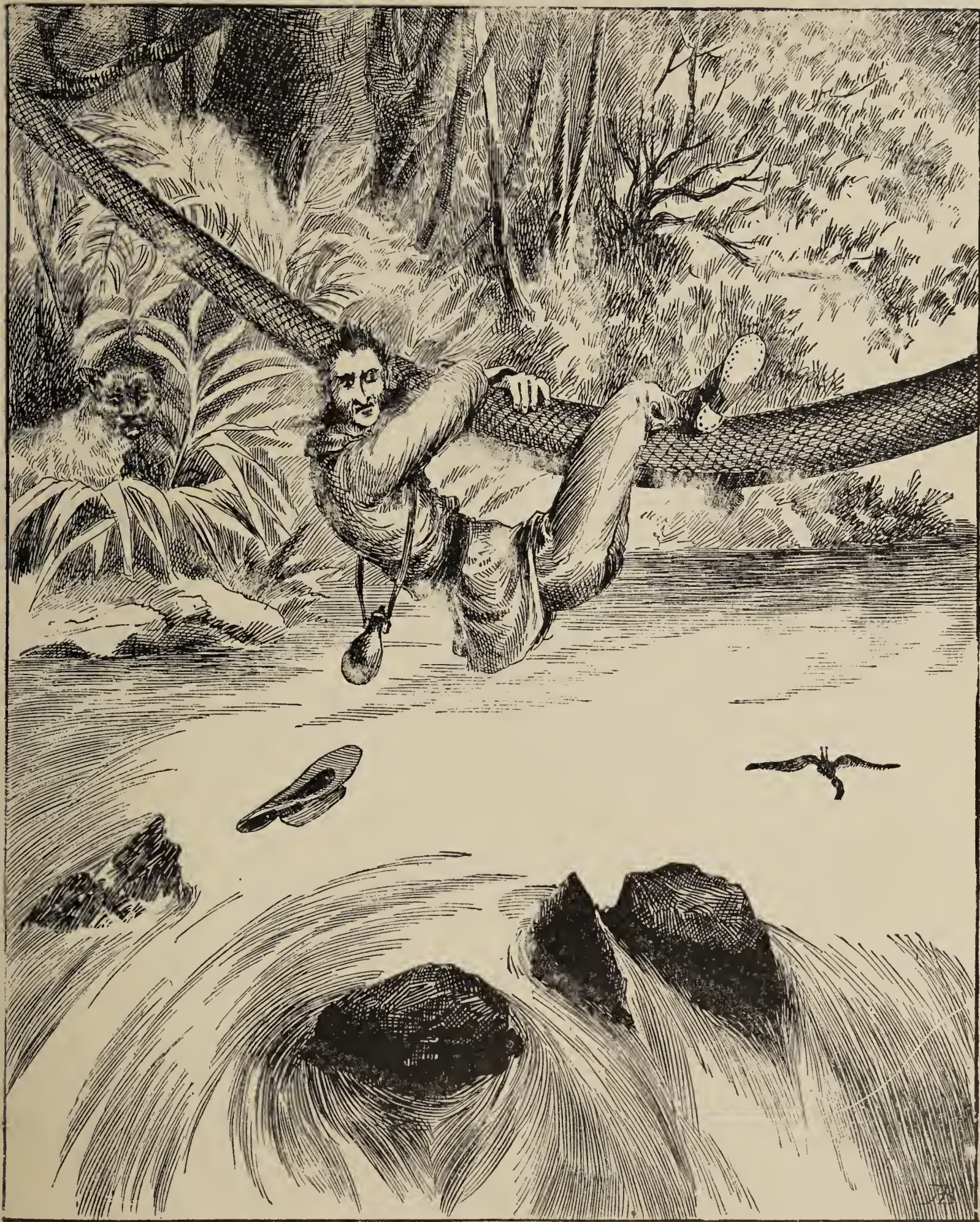
I had settled pretty promptly with one enemy; but my last two shots had only added to the speed and fury of the lioness. She had now entered on that series of springs by which some feline animals can move at the rate of a mile an hour for a brief space. I might have trembled if I had time. As it was, I embraced the tree again and swarmed up it this time with a liveliness that surprised myself. When the beast reached the tree I had just grasped the first branch.

Still I might have been forced to choose between being starved or eaten, had not the great snake proved a friend in need by supplying a means of crossing the stream without descending the tree. Before embarking on this serpentine bridge, however, I took care to hammer a long picture nail into the reptile's upper jaw, too. This last piece of carpentering I performed with the heel of my boot.

"I don't see how you crossed on the snake's body," observed Bob.

There is a gymnastic exercise, explained the Major, that consists in wriggling across a horizontal rod or bar with your hands and feet over it and your body under it. You may see this simple feat practised in any gymnasium. It is true that I found this mode of travelling rather more tiring than I had ever found it before. The snake was inconveniently thick; and it squirmed unceasingly, for it much preferred inside to outside passengers.

The stream was too wide for the lioness to leap, and too violent at that spot for her to swim. After eying me for some minutes she hurried back to her cubs with mingled feelings, glad to have driven off an enemy, sad to have missed a meal. I recrossed the river directly opposite my wagon, where the water was smooth and shallow. Having armed myself with a rifle and plenty of cartridges, I went back to the scene of my adventure to recover my shotgun, which I found lying at the foot of the palm.



THE MAJOR'S SUSPENSION BRIDGE.

“Did I skin that snake?” No, my young man, I did not. It was too useful precisely where it lay. There was then no bridge across the river from its fountain to its mouth. To-day a neat little suspension bridge rests on my snake as its main chain. The wayfarer, as he walks over the rapids on “The Major’s Bridge,” calls on his idols to reward my thoughtful benevolence. I feel I hardly deserve so many blessings, for, between ourselves, I don’t see how I could have got so large a skin to the wagon or the wagon to the skin.

“But hasn’t the serpent decayed yet?” asked Bill.

That is rather a simple question, said the Major; a boy of your age and intelligence might have guessed that I had its body thoroughly washed inside and outside with ——’s Patent Anti-phthitic Mummiline.

XXV.

DENOUNCED BY HIS PARROT.

AT the close of this last snake story the Major’s parrot did not begin to speak, as he usually did, when his master’s talk was over. In fact the bird had not uttered any wicked sentiments all day, although it had sometimes looked as if it felt them. The truth was that Bill had been finishing its education on the sly, and it was tired and disgusted with studying. But the Major was innocent of this, and so was Bob, who commented on the bird’s silence.

“Is Wacko sick,” he said, “or is he only repenting of his sins?”

It would be useless, of course, observed the Major, to say that *I* never taught him any of his flippant sayings.

“Quite so,” ejaculated the bird, chiming into the conversation.

But he certainly *has* got hold of some rude and objectionable expressions for himself. He picked up most of his English on the voyage home.

"Then if he's so quick and imitative, how is it he only speaks English? Why didn't he pick up some of the African languages also?" asked Bill.

Why, bless you, he *does* speak a modern African dialect most of the time. His shrieks and screams and cries, as you boys call them, are only its verbs and nouns and adjectives. He speaks it a little indistinctly, I admit, and with a foreign accent; but the gabble is genuine Lotolese. His laugh, when it is hearty, reminds me of King Pip's chuckle when his foragers brought him the two round youths who had won the first and second prizes in the Department of Fat Children at the Central African Exposition of Live Stock.

"Give us another!" cried the parrot, as a specimen of the progress of his education under his new tutor.

Bob now noticed Bill winking significantly, which led him to suspect that his big brother had something to do with the parrot's new phrases.

Wacko has a perverse aptitude for profanity, resumed the Major. His former owner won no end of feathers at a fair, by backing him against a notorious native swearer. The man imprudently took first innings and swore himself out of breath. Then, though he had never heard them before, Wacko repeated all the Negro's wicked words without a mistake, capping them by a few from his own list. In the opinion of the colored gentleman who acted as umpire, it was the finest exhibit of domestic oaths ever offered at any industrial exposition in those parts.

Here the parrot cried: "I am the biggest liar out——"

The Major laughed,—too soon.

“Nearly!” added Wacko, completing the sentence, which was another of his late acquisitions.

The boys were tittering now.

He certainly is rather loose in his statements, remarked Major Mendax.

“Like master, like man,” said Wacko after a pause. Soon he began to sing according to a parrot’s notions of music, which are unconventional.

“Does he sing in Lotolese too?” asked Bill mischievously.

But the Major was virtuously resolving to try and reform—his nephew and his parrot.

XXVI.

AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE.

ONE day, began the Major after tea, I observed a snake behaving in a very odd manner. He was peering round the horizon from the top of a custard-apple tree. On closer inspection I found an explanation of his antics. A fat coney, or "rock-rabbit," lay dead hard by; and I recollected that snakes, because they fall into a state of coma after gorging, and become incapable of resistance, commonly make sure that no enemy is near, before they eat a hearty meal. This snake was only a little more knowing than his fellows, and had climbed a tree to get a better view.

Now, even reptiles don't like being kept waiting for dinner, so he came down to drive me off. He was a tolerably biggish fellow, and gained rapidly upon me; and I noticed, to my terror, that he belonged to a species said by the negroes to be extremely venomous.

When a snake can outrun you, your chances of getting away are slim. No tree, hole or river is a place of refuge. So I was absolutely forced to risk my safety on a single shot, for it was plain that I should never have time to reload. Cocking my rifle, I faced round, steadied my nerves, brought the sight upon the evil eye of the reptile and calmly pulled the trigger.

But my firmness left me the moment I had fired, for the serpent wriggled on and on, quicker, if anything, than before. I had barely

time to club my rifle when he was upon me. I struck wildly, missed, and lost my footing from the violence of my ineffectual blow.

His green and scarlet scales flashed above me in the sun; his body wreathed itself into a hundred curves. Then he erected himself, arched his neck for the final dart, and dropt like an arrow on my prostrate neck.

Somehow I did not feel his fangs; but then I had heard before of people who never felt their death-blow. It was some minutes before my senses had returned sufficiently to enable me to notice that the snake was lying still with his head on my bosom.

His head! What? Had I lost *my* head, or had he lost *his*?

I gradually came to the conclusion that the loss was his, for I could feel my own cranium, and I could neither feel nor see his. Yes, my nerves *had* been steady when I fired—I had shot the top off the creature.

Serpents, and worms, and eels, you know, are seldom thoroughly aware that they are dead until some moments after their decease. The news of the demise of one extremity does not reach the other extremity for a minute or two; or, if it does, the latter extremity certainly goes on wriggling in a very unfeeling and unseemly manner.

“United in death!” said a greedy viper, with tears in his eyes, when his twin brother stuck in his throat and choked him.

If the serpent that chased me uttered his regrets, I fancy he expressed a totally different sentiment. It may have been equally unselfish, though: he may have only mourned the separation from his better half. But I could not hear his last speech—his parting words were with his head, and that was far away.

XXVII.

THE ILL-REQUITED CAMEL.

WAALI, son of Hassan the camel-dealer, borrowed the finest camel in his father's stud. He was going to make a runaway match, like young Lochinvar, and his love was daughter of a desert chieftain who hated Waali and his creed of Islam. So Waali was right to select Benazi, a camel, or, strictly speaking, a dromedary, famed for speed, sagacity, and endurance.

A leisurely ride of two days—he rode leisurely to keep his camel fresh—brought him to his rendezvous. But he arrived a day too late. The terrible father of Kuku, for this was the fair one's name, had folded his tents and gone many miles farther into the desert. But Waali gamely resolved to persevere. The trail was broad, and fresh, and easy to follow unless it should be suddenly effaced by a simoom.

After sundry hardships he reached the summer resort of Kuku's tribe—a grove, watered by a pretty stream. He caught the first glimpse of it over the summit of a little knoll. At the near side of the grove stood a dark and graceful figure, which his lover's instinct told him was Kuku's.

“Kneel, Benazi!” he commanded; and the camel knelt, and lowered his neck too; for he understood that his rider wanted to use the knoll as a screen.

Waali had not to wait for nightfall, as he intended, for Kuku's watchful eye had seen his head and the camel's at the same moment that her lover had seen her; so she strolled towards the knoll, to

satisfy her curiosity. After a fond embrace, Waali placed her behind him on the dromedary's back and urged Benazi to his utmost speed.

No sooner had they left the shelter of the knoll than the chieftain spied them. He roared for his lasso and assegai, and untethered his wild zebra, which delighted in pursuing fugitives, but could not be forced to budge on any other errand.

The chase was a notable one. The fiery zebra, fresher and less encumbered, gained slightly but perceptibly on the camel. Their wild gallop was unbroken when, three hours later, the sun went down and the lustrous moon of the tropics loomed above the horizon.

A little stream lay before them just then, and the lovers were thirsty and Waali's water-skin was empty. He loosed it from Benazi's side and appealed—not in vain—to the sagacity of the noble animal. The camel reached back his head, grasped the skin in his teeth, and lowered his long neck into the stream, as he trotted through it. The water gurgled into the opened mouth of the water-skin, which was full when Benazi, still running, stretched it back to his rider; but not a drop found its way down the parched throat of the unselfish dromedary. He would not waste one precious moment on himself.

On they flew through the moonlit waste. Wild beasts that joined in the chase on their own account were soon hopelessly distanced. About midnight the camel was only ten rods ahead; but half an hour later he was still keeping the same lead. His superior staying power was beginning to show. Seeing this the savage chieftain goaded his zebra with his spear-point, and the frenzied animal made a last effort to close upon the fugitives. Soon only five rods divided pursuers and pursued; then four; then three. The gentle Kuku shut her eyes and clung closer to her lover, as the chief poised his lasso and hurled it with unerring aim.

But the intelligent Benazi saw the danger and tossed his long neck back above the heads of his riders. He knew that *they* could be pulled off his back, but his neck, he reckoned, was a fixture; and besides, he trusted in his master's aid. The noose descended on his devoted neck; but before it stopped or stifled him, the alert Waali severed it with his knife.

This was the end of the race, for the zebra now dropped more and more behind in spite of the threats and cruelty of his rider. At last the jaded animal fell heavily and lay motionless; and the angry chieftain faded from the lovers' view, impotently shaking his assegai and mumbling wicked oaths in Tuaric.

Poor Benazi, too, was nearly dropping before very long. The drain of that desperate race had quite exhausted those wonderful reserves of fat and of water that every camel carries inside; and next morning his hump had well-nigh disappeared.

"What!" exclaimed little Bob in bewilderment.

"Camels *do* lose their humps from exhaustion," said Bill decisively.

Benazi did, at all events, resume the Major; not a vestige of his hump remained in the afternoon; for they had come to no water ever since the pursuit ended, and Waali wanted all that was in the water-skin for Kuku and himself.

The young couple reached their destination that evening, having made a six days' journey in little more than one. Old Hassan hastened to congratulate his son and welcome his daughter-in-law to her new home. Her *trousseau*, indeed, was sadly "conspicuous by its absence," as the reporters say; but she brought a dower of beauty and innocence, and the camel-dealer had never learned in any centre of civilization to ignore his children's sentiments in selecting spouses for them.

But when he saw the humpless camel, he did not recognize it at

all, and treated the scraggy animal's endearments with disgust and scorn. He thought his son had been swapping camels and been beaten in the trade.

"Ah, you fright of a camel!" he exclaimed, "why did you come to me instead of my own beautiful Benazi?" And he began belaboring the dilapidated beast in his vexation.

"He *is* Benazi, and he saved my life!" cried Waali.

But the explanation was too late. The heroic animal died at the first blow. Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms, quite vanquished him. His heart—which had remained stout when his hump shrunk and his various stomachs failed—his heart was broken.

* * * * *

On the spot where he fell a monument was erected some months afterwards by his remorseful master, with a legend in Arabic:—

HERE LIES BENAZI, THE GELERT OF HIS KIND.

So "nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust."

XXVIII.

MY OWN BUGBEAR.

AMONG its other wasted wonders the western Sahara hid the hideousness of a native boy, called Nigg. He had a mouth reaching very nearly from ear to ear, jagged teeth, a teapot nose, and the crossest cross-eyes to be found in the Old World. A piebald complexion and a hare-lip were among his charms; for his beauty, like a bull-dog's, consisted in his ugliness. Moreover, he was the only negro I ever heard of who was both red-haired and partly bald. His fame was becoming so great that travelers were beginning to take him in as one of the sights of Africa.

When things had come to this point I went to see him myself, and found him even more hideous than he was rumored to be. My horse bolted at the first sight of him, and I could hardly make the animal come near him, even after the youngster had closed his eyes and mouth, as his parents bid him do. I had heard of people being "frights" before, but this fellow was one in earnest. So I thought it well to secure him before his parents knew his worth or grew conceited about him. These simple old folk gave him up for the moderate price of ninety-three cents, and thought they had made a good bargain.

I called for him next day, and brought a blind mule to carry him to my house. His parents never kissed him when bidding him good-

bye, and even his mother had to shut her eyes when he stood in front of her. He was very docile, and kept before me all the way, as he was told, without looking round once or frightening my horse.

Having fully determined to grow accustomed to him, I forced myself to look at him many times each day, and soon was able to view his face for several seconds without shuddering. After a while I even began to fear that Nigg was not so very frightful after all, at least not frightful enough to scare cannibals and beasts of prey, as I had fondly hoped when purchasing him.

However, I was cheered up from time to time by seeing the terrifying effect he produced on men and animals that saw him *for the first time*. None of these were more alarmed than he himself was when he first looked into a mirror. He started back with a yell, and rushed to me, exclaiming: "Massa! massa! Black debbil in a dish! Black debbil in a dish!" He was generally an amiable lad and so he rather astonished me one day by darting a spiteful glance at his mule, which had just thrown him. Well for the mule that it was blind, for I never saw so hideous a face in a dream, even after eating four platefuls of plum-pudding. For my part, although the sight did bring on a slight attack of the chills, I was quite charmed at this proof of Nigg's powers. If any hyena, or snake, or gorilla, could face the face Nigg made then, I wanted to see the animal.

And so I took Nigg out on a hunting expedition. The first beast we came upon was a leopard, which lay on the carcase of an antelope, and growled as animals are wont to do when interrupted at their meals.

"Make the face you made at the mule!" I cried.

But poor Nigg never looked more frightened and less frightful than when he tried to do so. If the leopard was not showing signs of charging, I think I should have burst out laughing at the abject terror of the boy. In another second he was running for his life, and

the leopard after him. However, I managed to bowl the beast over at the first shot, for he presented a full broadside as he bounded after Nigg.

This cowardice of Nigg seemed fatal to my hope of using him as a body-guard. He was frightened by every animal that we wanted to frighten, and he only scared the animals we wanted to get near. I could not get a shot at a deer or antelope closer than five hundred yards, and was soon forced to turn homewards from loss of ammunition and want of meat. I spent my last cartridge, in missing a gazelle, about ten miles from home.

Soon after this unlucky shot we entered a valley, through which a stream had formerly flowed. Happening to look a-head, I saw some creature creeping stealthily towards our path. Its outlines were obscured by the dense shade of a tamarind tree, which stood at the edge of a thicket. My horse was too tired, and the ground too uneven, to retreat; besides which disadvantages a violent wind would be blowing in our faces if we turned. To go on boldly was our best chance.

If I could only call forth that Gorgon glance that Nigg had once wasted on his blind mule! There was Nigg, and there was the mule. The same causes generally produce the same effects. The question, therefore, was how to make the mule throw Nigg. Happily, Nigg had not seen the wild beast, which I could only see dimly myself, and that because I knew where to look for it. As we approached the tree, I leaned forward in my saddle and tickled the mule with my whip. Most African cattle start violently when anything like an insect touches them; for some insect bites are fatal to them.

Up went the mule's "business end," and down went the unexpected Nigg, with his angry face happily turned from me and towards the ambushed beast. With a howl, rather than a roar, a large lion sprang from the thicket and disappeared beyond the summit of the

right-hand slope. Such a shivering, wilted, scared animal in a lion's skin I never saw before or after."

"And what became of Nigg afterwards?" asked Bill, as the Major made a pause.

In spite of his usefulness on this one occasion, said the Major, I found him too unreliable to employ as a scarecrow. A friend, learning that I was disappointed in the boy, begged him of me, promising to use him kindly; and so I gave him away. I did foolishly, for the rascally "friend" sold him soon afterwards for £2,000 as an escort to some traders from Morocco."

"As an escort!" ejaculated Bill.

Yes. You see these fellows have to take a number of armed men with them in their trading expeditions, and Nigg was just as much protection, for they *knew how to use him*. I might have guessed how myself, for I had often been told in my boyhood that anybody could scare a bull by merely turning his back to the animal and bending down and gazing calmly at it through his legs. The sudden change of shape, they say, will frighten any animal unused to transformation scenes.

It is true that little Washington Smith tried the dodge unsuccessfully with our bull, Jack Horner. But Horner either understood transformations or else thought the new animal before him would toss just as nicely as a boy. After a further brief transformation into a bird, little Wash touched the ground on the safe side of the fence, thereby shortening the pleasant pastime of the bull.

But then, you see, Nigg had certain advantages that little Wash had not. *His* face, looking at one in this inverted and unusual position, was simply diabolical. Not a lion, nor a buffalo, nor any other living thing wanted any closer acquaintance with so terrible a creature.

"Is he an escort still?" inquired little Bob.

No, the poor fellow, said the Major. The traders once came upon a short-sighted lion, which did not see Nigg, and consequently did not run away, and the unhappy escort was forced to stay with his head down until he died from pressure of blood upon the brain.

Poor Nigg! Barring perhaps the Gorgon Medusa and the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, he certainly was the ugliest thing out.

XXIX.

THE "PORCUPINES."

"**A**RE the stories of explorers true, Uncle, about the nearly white tribes they found in Africa?" asked little Bob.

Perhaps so, said the Major; indeed, I have reason to believe there may be more pale Africans than would appear on the surface.

"Do you mean that they burrow in the ground, like the Diggers?"

Not exactly. But perhaps I can explain my idea best by telling you how I came to form it:—

In one of my expeditions, my servant and I—ourselves concealed by the foliage of an aloe—saw a fierce battle between two tribes. One of these was light brown, the other *apparently* quite black. Contrary to the usual order of things, the sable race, though far inferior in numbers, routed their lighter enemies. What most surprised me in the combat was the pluck and endurance of the victors in bearing their wounds. Several of them actually joined in the pursuit with quite a dozen arrows sticking in their bodies. They did not, in fact, seem the least inconvenienced by the wounds of these missiles, although the chances were that their opponents, like

most natives of those regions, used poisoned arrows. The pursuers would even draw the shafts out of their own bodies without flinching and fire them at the fugitive foes.

I soon guessed the victorious tribe to be the widely-dreaded "Porcupines," and I now understood one of the fabulous stories told about them, namely, that spears and arrows grew, ready made, out of their bodies.

So interested was I in their strange hardihood, that I lay in hiding till the night, in order to survey the battle-field, and find out whether these heroes were made of ordinary flesh and blood. We found only one "Porcupine," and he had been killed by an arrow in the eye. There were three or four other missiles sticking in his body. These my servant pulled out with their points *quite dry*! On a closer examination of the body, we found it covered with a crust or coat of dirt, varying from one to two inches in thickness, which rendered it almost impenetrable to arrows.

This, then, was the secret of the "Porcupines"! It was this that enabled them to defeat superior numbers, and made them the "boss" tribe of that portion of the desert. Their braves never washed. No, never; not even on their marriage-days and their yearly feasts, when their neighbors sometimes did. These fellows had the same advantage over their cleaner enemies which the mail-clad crusading knights had over the Saracens. Besides, they had a double stock of ammunition without the trouble of carrying it, for they could use the arrows which struck them, as these seldom reached the skin, and never went an inch beneath it. The malarious dews of the swamps, the burning sands of the desert, driven by the simoom, never entered the sealed pores of their skin.

But perhaps a still greater benefit of their dirt was that no wild beast, however hungry, could manage to eat one of them. A cruel chief once exposed a captive "Porcupine" to his pet lion, which

he had previously starved for three days. But the most the beast did was to *crack the skin* of its victim. Then it turned away with the expression of a sick child that has taken a dose without jam, and observed in lion-language to its mate, "Much shell, sour kernel."

These "Porcupines" are called "Running Quivers" in another native dialect, both names having been given them from their habit of discharging the arrows which stick in their own bodies in a battle.

"But what have these nasty 'Porcupines' to do with the white tribes I asked about?" said Bob.

Why; I thought I told you that in reality they had skins far whiter than their enemies. Doubtless this is due partly to the shelter from the sun afforded by their outer crust, and partly to their general love of shade. It was once the fashion among them, I was told, to sow cotton plants in the alluvial soil of their heads, thereby making up for the lack of shady trees and enabling them to sell all their ostrich feathers.

And now, good night, boys, added the Major, yawning; it's after bed-time.

"He said his servant was with him, Bob," said Bill, rising: "he can tell us more about these 'Porcupines.'"

Oh, its no use asking Aristides, said the Major; I had a different servant then.

"But you said the other day that Aristides had been your servant ever since you went to Africa!"

I ought to have said most of the time; but the fact is I hate to think of his predecessor.

"Why so?"

Because I killed him! The poor fellow never washed and seldom worked again after he discovered the secret of the "Porcupines." He wouldn't wash for fear of being killed by an arrow or a

lion; and he wouldn't work because his scales got so thick that whipping only amused him. So one day I set to chipping off his crust with a hammer and chisel. However, I grew tired by the time I had cleared his right half, and I deferred the remaining half to the next day. By the morning he had died of uneven exposure—like the sheep with the two owners who could not agree upon the best time to shear it.

“But I thought it was never cold in Africa,” observed Bill.

Nor *was* it cold, said the Major; but if you were accustomed to clothes over an inch thick, and had them suddenly taken away, I fancy you'd *feel* cold anywhere.

XXX.

A USEFUL KNOT.

“WHY do you part your hair on the right, Uncle?” asked Bill. Ah! said the Major, that is owing to a little accident that happened me in Senegal. I remember feeling like a mouse which has been cut off from its hole and sees a cat approaching stealthily through the grass.

It was indeed a great cat, of the leopard species, that I saw creeping through the long, prickly underbrush, as I lay on my back under a dragon-tree, enjoying my mid-day rest. He was some yards away at the other side of the tree, and the moment after I perceived him he had put the trunk between my eyes and him. Suspecting mischief, I rose and stepped instinctively towards the tree. The blanket on which I had lain helped to muffle my footsteps, and fortunately a soft moss covered the earth between the roots.

I now bitterly regretted having forgotten my gun in the tent. The fact is that I had strolled out to the dragon-tree with the sole object of escaping the noon heat beneath its ample shade, and that, having slept some nights unmolested close by, I had grown careless.

There was no earthly mode of climbing the stem on the side next me; but I had a vague hope that I might find some bush-rope or creeper on the other side, or perhaps some natural notches such as I had sometimes noticed on old trees. I moved half-way round the trunk, which was some twenty feet in girth, without finding any aids of the kind, and, stranger still, without seeing any sign of the enemy.

At last I perceived the tip of his tail moving before me round the tree. He was evidently stalking me. I followed him almost breathlessly. Clearly, as long as I could keep his tail in sight, he could not overtake me from behind. His tail, by the by, was an unusually long one.

When he had finished one circuit of the trunk he quickened his pace a little, and I quickened mine. Soon he paused to listen. His tail was now in contact with a high, exposed root of the *dracæna*. The opportunity was too good to lose. I jumped forward and in a trice had tied his tail to the root by a sailor's knot. But it was tough rope to handle, and no mistake.

Before I could get away the leopard had reared round on his hind legs, and placing his fore paws one on each shoulder, had pulled me on my knees. For a second his eyes glared into mine and I felt his unpleasant breath on my cheek. Just then he felt the unwonted drag on his tail, and faced round to attend to the assailant in the rear. It was only for a moment, but that moment put me out of the brute's reach. One of his claws, however, divided my hair, as I was retreating backward, scratching the scalp in a rather ugly manner. And this is the reason why I never part my hair on the left side, as you noticed.

The leopard, whose tail had so traitorously helped his enemy, was delivered from his sad predicament by his consort. Soon after I had reached the tent, his roars were answered from the neighboring wood, and a few pretty bounds brought his fond leopardess to the rescue. Finding him in durance vile, she howled piteously at first; but after a while she bit his tail off above the knot, and he slunk away with a shortened and shabby-looking appendage.

I regret having to record that a leopardess which had so nobly helped her mate in his sore need should have then meanly deserted him. But the very next day I saw her keeping company with another leopard, who sported a long and elegant tail. This conduct of hers led her husband to remark, in the bitterness of his heart; "Better be out of the world than out of the fashion!" And he only wished his tail was long enough to hang himself by. In which event he fondly believed his charmer would repent of her fickleness.

And there I think he believed right—but whether her repentance would arise from his tragic death or rather from the restoration of his tail, recalling her wayward affections too late, I must leave to the philosophers to decide.

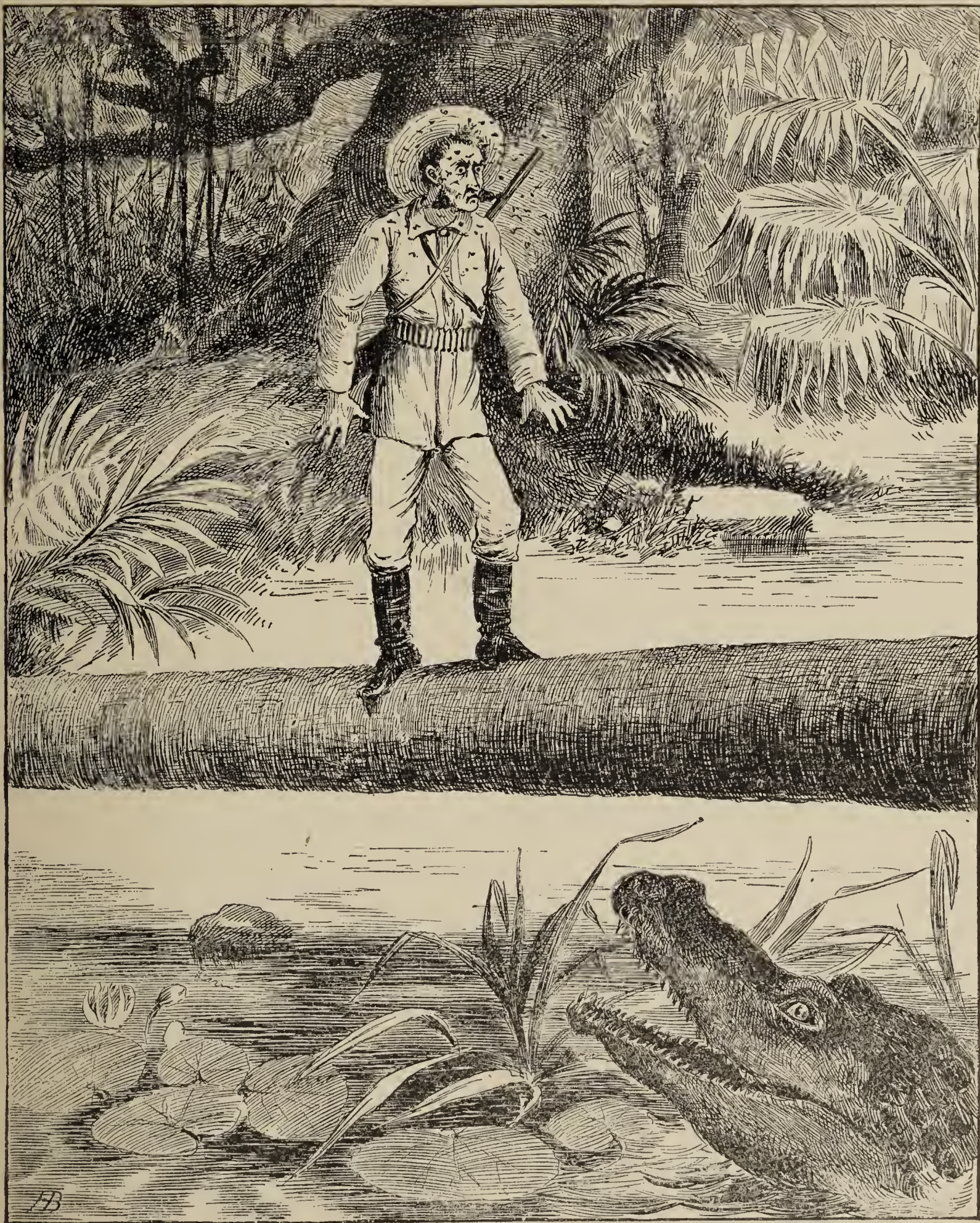
XXXI.

A BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

YOU are mistaken if you think that mosquitoes exercise no discretion in selecting their victims. If they acted without caution, why should they prefer to bite sleeping, fishing, and spooning people?

But the African mosquito beats ours in cunning, as it does in size. On one of the northern tributaries of the Niger the long trunk of a sago-palm forms a bridge. There is no other means of crossing the stream within some miles of the spot; so that even nervous travelers are bound to risk the passage. Once embarked upon the log, it is more dangerous for one to turn back than to go on. Swimming across is out of the question. On the only two occasions that I walked over that trunk, which I never will walk over again, I saw the snout of an ill-natured-looking crocodile just under me. He opened his mouth a bit, as if to show his readiness to accommodate the traveling public. He probably waits there always.

By the roots of that fallen tree dwelt a fiendish tribe of mosquitoes. I must give them the palm for being the biggest and ugliest specimens of the genus *Culex*. They lived in perpetual ambush, never attacking anybody until he was well advanced upon the trunk and unable to defend himself. To move one's hand rapidly there means probably to lose one's balance; and the cunning gnats knew this too well. They lit on every square inch of your face and neck, and strolled about until they had selected a tender spot. Then they bit you at their leisure and loved to contemplate your pained expression. Their



A DILEMMA—STINGS ABOVE OR JAWS BELOW.

individual hums seemed like so many mocking laughs, while the whole band played a sort of triumphal march. Most people would prefer instant suicide, if they did not dislike to gratify the crocodile, who was apparently in league with the insects.

The day I crossed the trunk I was forced to return by it the same evening in order to rejoin the wagons. I covered my face and neck and hands as well as possible with palm-leaves, and puffed a cigar as fast as I could. But these mosquitoes had no objection to smoking, and my precautions did no good beyond disappointing my persecutors a little. They bit through all my armor, but they did not enjoy themselves as much as usual.

The next time I came to that tree-bridge I came as an avenger and had my magnifying glasses on. I spotted the mosquito sentinel winking a signal into a hole, which I rightly guessed to be the headquarters. Before the guard could turn out, I clapt a poultice on the place and numbered it among the buried cities of the plain.

But I had not wholly annihilated the swarm, a few members of which were out of doors; nor indeed was this the only nest of wicked gnats in that neighborhood. True, it had claimed a monopoly of all game passing the bridge, and had driven away all poachers. Now, however, that its ascendancy was destroyed, a crowd of mixed flies rendered the sago-palm still far from a desirable promenade.

I was told that a Mohammedan fakir started to cross this bridge twenty-five times a day. He considered it the best available practice for the Bridge of Al Sirat, which, you know, spans the Seven Hells and must be crossed before the true believer gets into Paradise. But he had much less practice than he expected, for on the eighth day he fainted from loss of blood and fell into the river. The unmurmuring patience of the crocodile really deserved some encouragement about that time. It is to be hoped the holy man had better luck at the next crossing.

XXXII.

CAUGHT BY THE CANNIBALS.

STOP pinching me, you young scoundrel !
“ Why are you so thin there, uncle ? ” asked little Bob.

Oh, that’s where they carved me, replied the Major.

“ Who ? ” cried both the boys.

The cannibals.

“ What did they carve you for ? ”

For supper, answered the Major.

“ But I didn’t think they’d eat you raw, observed Bob.

Nor did they: they cooked me, or rather my chop, with the greatest care. This is the way it was :—

I was going inland to secure a fine lot of feathers, and a young missionary had availed himself of my escort to return to his post in the interior. On the second night of our journey we were surprised by a wandering band of cannibals. Their chief, the redoubted N’go, felt us and numbered us, in order of merit, for his table. The missionary, fat, and young, and tender, and innocent, was number one. I was number four, being classed after the negro wagoners. I accepted my ignominious position without a murmur.

Unhappy Abednego Q. Smith ! He had come to open the ears and the hearts of the natives, and he only opened their mouths. He had come to cure their souls, and they cured his body—for their chief

had part of him pickled for his future use. They did not read mark, and learn him ; but they did inwardly digest him.

The cannibals held high jinks for three days, and I was forced to see my companions, one after the other, suffering horribly ; for N'go was a luxurious liver and had adopted the Abyssinian recipe, described in Bruce's *Travels*, for increasing the tenderness of meat. He always insisted on having his chops or steaks cut from a living animal.

The fourth morning dawned, but my doom was deferred for three days more.

" Why so ? " asked Bob.

The victim who preceded me had poisoned himself just before he was carved. He disagreed with the whole tribe and took away their appetites for a day. Next morning they came upon my keg of whisky and were dead drunk all the fifth day and night. Thanks to my almanac, I played the old eclipse dodge on the sixth day, and, my prophecy proving true, they were afraid to lay hands on me for some hours after.

But on the seventh day N'go's appetite overcame every scruple. Before noon I was soundly swipped by his head cook that my nervous spasms might make my flesh tender. Then he skilfully cut off a chop for his master's supper. N'go liked it and graciously expressed his intention of breakfasting off me next morning. I was accordingly to be kept alive another night.

" But didn't you bleed awfully, uncle ? " asked Bob.

Not a bit in the world, answered the Major ; the savages had an herb which was an excellent styptic, and very soothing into the bargain. But all they cared for was that it kept the meat nice and fresh. I know I was surprised at feeling so little pain or inconvenience,—in fact, I recollect noticing how savory my chop smelt when it was being broiled.

Nevertheless, when night had fallen I wished it was all over, and envied the Rev. Abednego's fat and fate. "If one must be done, 'twere well one were done quickly," as Shakespeare remarked to the King of the Cannibal Islands. This dying by half pounds, I mused, could only happen under a bloated monarchy. Were these cannibals freemen they would make a barbecue of me!

My regrets were ended by an appalling scream. It was the war-cry of the Xus, a hostile tribe, who burst, like famished wolves, upon their sleeping foes. To say that my captors were trussed and ready for dressing in a very few minutes would be quite unnecessary if you knew anything of the leader of the Xus, who was surnamed Gorilla, from his ferocity and strength. He was very nearly as dreadful a being as a monarch whom the poet describes:—

"King Boria Bungalee Boo
Was a man-eating African smell;
His breath was a hullabaloo,
His whisper a terrible yell."

Gorilla ordered me to be untied, for he generously unbinds his enemies' captives, at all events when their choicest cuts have been already used. In return I directed his attention to the whisky; and while he was in the genial stage of drunkenness he commanded six of his followers to escort my wagon home.

The suffering N'go groaned as he saw me going away uneaten:

"It is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

XXXIII.

THE ASHUS.

“**D**ID you ever meet any other cannibals?”

I used to do a good deal of business with the Ashus, a small tribe who occupied the second oasis from our trading-post, answered the Major.

“But weren’t you afraid to deal with them, uncle?” asked little Bob.

Not at all: to eat me would have been like killing the goose with the golden eggs. Why, with the beads and shells I paid them every year for feathers they could buy a dozen blacks, younger and plumper than I.

Besides, these Ashus had once been partially Christianized. Indeed, there were still some remains of Christianity among them. I was shown a missionary’s skull in their chief’s tent, and they say a grace for what they are about to receive—with extra fervor when they are sitting down to a good fat boy. They don’t call themselves men-eaters, but “Lovers of Mankind,” and they feel quite virtuous when indulging in their favorite food. “Are not men better than reptiles?” asked one of them, when somebody commented on their national diet. Not one of them would taste an oyster, or turtle, or frog; and they would rather grill their grandmothers than chew tobacco—perhaps for the same scriptural reason that made the Russians before Peter the Great condemn smoking, so Voltaire tells us, “because not

that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which goeth out of the mouth."

The Ashus are bound to take care of their young children, but commonly leave them to shift for themselves at twelve. In the struggle for existence that ensues the fittest (not the fattest) survive. But they never cook relations—when provisions are plentiful. My own host unselfishly resigned his three plumpest sisters to their admirers, though he considered all three of them likely to be young ladies of very good taste—if nicely cooked. The only mark of his emotion, as he performed these acts of self-sacrifice, was a slight swallowing in the throat. During a famine this pious Ashu ate his favorite wife, that she might not be contaminated by the teeth of strangers.

"I never knew how much I loved her before!" he sobbed, bending disconsolately over her last bone. "How charming she looked when she was dressed for dinner! She was too sweet to live long."

So you see even cannibals may have their feelings.

XXXIV.

CHASED BY A HOOP-SNAKE.

IN the Yelgree forest, near our trading-post, there was a big snake that had adopted rapid transit. I saw him when he first learned it. He was chasing a small hoop-snake, when the little one put his tail in his mouth, after the manner of his kind, and rolled clean out of sight. Well, what did his big snakeship do but put his own tail into his mouth and begin practising! After a few turns he grew accustomed to the thing, and in half an hour could beat the best bicycle time on record.

A few days after this I shot a deer, and was carrying its horns home. As I was passing a few hundred yards from the Yelgree forest, I saw what seemed to be a loose wheel coming out of the wood. It was the biggest wheel I ever saw. I felt almost as if the polar circle had got loose from its fixings, and was making for me, at double-quick.

"Hoop la!" I cried, and then I shut up, for I saw it was the big revolving python.

'Twas no use shooting at his head, for he was revolving at the rate of sixty miles an hour; and no use trying to escape unless I could hire an express engine on the spot. So I just lay down to make it harder for the reptile to swallow me. I meant that he should take me broadside, if at all.

When the snake came up and noticed the deer's horns, he shivered, just as a Christian would if he saw a horned man! As I lay, they must have seemed to be growing out of my head, and the python may have mistaken me for the Old Serpent himself. Whatever his idea may have been, he had not ceased shivering before he made tracks for the forest, disappeared from my gaze, and let me go in peace.

On my way home I reflected that horned animals are bad for the health of serpents, which swallow their prey whole, and that, time and again, imprudent pythons and boas have been found dead with deer all swallowed but the antlers.

"A snake," I said to myself, "that is smart enough to take a hint in the way of locomotion is smart enough to take a hint in the way of feeding."

Anyhow, his prudence or his fears lost him a good meal, for I was fat then and fairly young and tender. A little learning is a dangerous thing for snakes.

XXXV.

A FIRE-BALLOON.

“**Y**OU promised to show us how to make a fire-balloon before my birthday,” Bill reminded his uncle one day.

So I will, my boy, said the Major; and I only hope you may find the knowledge as useful as I did once.

“How could it have been useful?”

It only saved a thousand human beings from destruction—that was all.

“Tell us the story, uncle,” begged little Bob.

Well, began the Major, I had just bought up all the feathers that the Kabyles had for sale, and was waiting till their ostrich hunters should return to camp with a new lot. These Kabyles are a tribe of the Tuarick nation which is scattered over the whole southern desert; and I liked doing business with them, for I always found them friendly and fair. On the present trip I had given them fireworks for their goods, for these savages were getting tired of beads and humming tops and glass marbles. The new medium of exchange had proved attractive and successful. I had secured several thousand dollars' worth of feathers for one box of fire-crackers, two catherine-wheels, ten rockets, and thirteen Roman candles—not including a few specimens of each kind which I had let off to show what they were like. I had some ready-made fireworks still left, besides materials for making several fire-balloons.

I was sitting on the ground, eating my supper with Chummi, the chief of the tribe, when we saw a cloud of dust to the southward. At first we fancied it was a whirlwind, but presently we could see men moving beneath it, and soon shields and assegais glittered in the rays of the setting sun. Half an hour later the darkness would have been complete, and we should have been taken by surprise.

As it was, Chummi had just time to call his warriors to arms and to man the steep bank of the Wady Waa, which lay between us and the approaching forces. Chummi was afraid they were certain cannibals from the south who had sent out a foraging expedition which was known to be not very far away. If Chummi's surmise was correct, the outlook was a gloomy one, for the best men of the Kabyles were away hunting. However, the new comers might not venture to ford the Wady, which luckily was full of water, in the night; and our hunters might be back before the morning.

When the advancing host had come to the other side of the Wady, there was just enough light remaining to see that it more than doubled ours in number and to recognize, in its front ranks, *the Kabyle hunters bound together with thongs*. A cry of horror burst from the Kabyles at this sight, which confirmed their worst fears. The cry seemed to embolden the cannibals, who had halted and seemed doubtful about crossing in the rapidly increasing darkness. Some of them now dashed forwards; but the first two men who entered the water fell before my rifle, and the others fled back from this unexpected weapon.

They soon showed signs of leaving us in peace for that night, for they began to light fires and prepare for their horrible supper. I resolved to rescue their victims, if possible. To this end I bade Chummi to notify his warriors to expect something strange and on no account to run away. I also told him to have a dozen men in readiness to discharge the rockets at a moment's notice. Then

I went to my wagon, unpacked my fire-balloon materials, put Chummi's pet kitten in my pocket, and withdrew with my servant to the windward of the enemy.

I will give you a rough idea of how I made my fire-balloon—another time I will *show* you, which is better. I pasted together long strips of tissue-paper, of between an oblong and an oval shape. These were joined and made air-tight at the top, but pasted round a strong circular wire at the bottom. This circular wire had a cross wire, piercing a sponge soaked in spirits of wine, which I set fire to. The burning spirit heats and expands the air inside the paper frame until it becomes lighter than the surrounding atmosphere, into which the balloon then rises and floats away till the flame expires. Of course you must take great care that the paper does not catch fire before it swells out into its proper shape. On that occasion I made my servant sit on the branch of a tree to hold the top of the balloon while I lit the spirits of wine. It was a dry and calm evening; so the paste soon dried, and there was no hitch of any kind.

When the balloon was inflated and straining in its efforts to rise, I tied the kitten by a string to the cross wire so as to make a sort of tail to the balloon. I considered this seeming cruelty justified by its merciful object. At first the balloon would not carry the extra weight; but it was a ten-footer, and in a few moments, when the air inside grew hotter, it rose.

Away it sailed majestically into the darkness—a ball of red, and blue, and white flame, for the strips of paper were of different colors. As I had started it to the windward of the enemy, of course it floated towards them, the kitten all the while piercing the air with its mewings.

The fires of the cannibals were blazing now. They had cut the thongs of the fattest captives and were just handing them over to the cooks, when a flight of rockets hissed through the air from the

Kabyle side of the Wady, and burst into balls and serpents of flame over their astonished heads. At first the savages uttered screams of terror. But their cries died away in their throats, as they beheld an unearthly visitor cleaving its way more slowly through the heavens and coming directly toward them. It was a thing of marvellous beauty, made of many-colored flame, and it floated evenly and gracefully on. Nevertheless it was evidently a malign spirit, for its voice was harsh, and shrill, and curdling to the blood. As it came nearer and nearer, and as its screeches grew louder and louder, the cannibals prostrated themselves before it in silent adoration. The power of motion had apparently left them.

My object, which was to make them fly, thus seemed likely to fail from the very excess of their terror. I therefore walked across the stream and exploded two boxes of fire-crackers among them. This roused them from their stupor, and, the balloon having already passed over their heads, they mustered up courage enough to flee, uttering yells of alarm and not even thinking of their captives. They never afterwards molested the Kabyle tribe, which had so evidently formed an alliance with evil genii.

XXXVI.

A PAIR OF BRIGHT EYES.

“**D**ID a wild beast ever come into your house?” asked little Bob, one evening.

Once, replied the Major. There was a door open from my bedroom into the garden, which was a foot below it. I generally took precious good care to fasten this door, but on that occasion I suppose I must have forgotten it.

In the night I awoke with an uneasy sense of something being wrong. I could barely see that the door into the garden was ajar, for the night was dark, and several cotton-trees spread their branches outside. But I distinctly saw two lurid balls of fire in the direction of the aforeside door. I knew they must be the eyes of some animal of the feline tribe—a small animal, I reasoned, if it was standing on the floor; a large one if it was standing in the garden. The eyes seemed large and far apart, but possibly that was partly owing to my fright.

My doubts were soon solved, for the fiery eyes suddenly rose a foot or so higher, and at the same time a soft pat on the floor just reached my ear. The beast had placed its fore paws on the floor, its hind paws still resting in the garden. Beyond a doubt it was a lion; and its stealthy mode of approach looked as if it meant business.

Between my bed and the garden door was a table on which lay

some matches and my firearms. They were within my reach and loaded. The barrel of my rifle nearly pointed at the door, and therefore at the intruder. But a false aim meant instant death to me, and how could I aim truly? I could not see the barrel, much less the sights of my rifle. To light a match would show me to the beast and make it spring at once. Nevertheless I felt for a match mechanically, and found one. Fortunately I grasped it by the head, as I knew by seeing a faint glow on my finger.

That gleam of phosphorus was a gleam of hope to me!

I clutched my rifle noiselessly and felt along the barrel for the sights. I rubbed them gently with the match-head, just enough to make two flickering points of light. These must have been invisible to the lion at first, for I took care to keep the barrel slightly raised.

Pat! pat! Up came the beast's hind legs on the floor, with a sharper sound, as if his claws were just coming out of their pin-cushions. Down went his eyes, burning brighter than before. He was evidently crouching for a spring. But my rifle had been lowered a second earlier, until the points of flickering phosphorus had come into line and rested between the lion's glaring eyes. The illuminated sights of my trusty weapon went down with him as he crouched. Then I cocked the rifle, which I thought it wise to do the last thing. The click, click! of the trigger broke the silence. I cocked and fired almost simultaneously.

The sharp report of the rifle was accompanied by another sound, which I had not calculated upon—the peculiar roar of a lion when he springs upon his prey. No wonder the Hebrews had different words to express the angry, the hungry, and the frightened roaring of this animal; and it is this variety in his tones that has made travellers as trustworthy as myself give such opposite descriptions of his roar.

In a second I was dashed back on my bed; the beast lay upon me, and I could hear his fearful fore-claws tearing through the mattress. But my terror was soon over, for the bullet had entered his brain, and his dying spasms ceased in a few seconds. The muscular exertion of his spring had probably been made *before* I fired.

My servant, who was awakened by the noise, pulled my body from where it lay—between the lion's hind and fore paws. One of the latter had grazed my left cheek, making the furrow which you see there.

“But I thought that was a wrinkle,” remarked Bill; “and you have one like it on the right cheek.”

Ah, so I have, said the Major. I was a vain young dog in those days, and had the other cheek cut to match. Some men would have a second story ready to account for the second cheek, but I always stick to facts.

“And stick *at* nothing!” whispered the irrepressible Bill.

XXXVII.

TREASURE-TROVE.

IT is commonly, but wrongly, supposed that no African tribes practice husbandry. The little land of Boo, ruled by the amiable monarch Boo-bee, is so fertile and well-watered that it supplies all the wants of its inhabitants. They never roam the desert, like other tribes, but stay at home and support themselves by honest toil—by climbing trees and gathering dates and tamarinds.

No, Bill, I cannot “tell you the latitude and longitude of Boo,” because I never learned how to calculate those things. This educational want has actually exposed my discoveries to some suspicion. Let my sufferings, boys, be a warning to you.

In this favored land bloomed the Princess Nulla, the pride of Boo-bee and the pearl of Boo.

This king’s daughter was glorious to behold. The royal diamond, a magnificent gem, hung from her neck on a lovely necklace of red twine. Her teeth were white and exquisitely filed, and her nails were pared in artistic imitation of the Egyptian pyramids. She was fairer and fatter, and had more beads and lovers than any maiden in the tribe. But her beauty was softened by that nameless expression of sadness which has so often been noticed in the faces of persons doomed to extraordinary sufferings.

It was an evil hour when Wagga, surnamed the Antelope, thought

of wooing the Pearl of Boo. He resembled an antelope in fleetness of foot rather than in gentleness of disposition, and was the son of a chief who had been executed for high treason. On that occasion Wagga had won the favor of the simple Boo-bee by informing against his own father; and hence it was with her parent's consent that the young man paid his addresses to Nulla. There were those who suspected that Wagga loved her diamond more than herself, for he had been to Sierra Leone, and had learned that Christians value these gems very much more highly than heathens, and pay amazing prices for them.

At all events, he proposed and was rejected, gently though decidedly, for Nulla never liked to hurt her lovers' feelings. Indeed, she never coquetted, or led them on by winking, touching noses, or any other undue familiarities, like certain young ladies she could name, if heathen charity permitted her to do so.

Soon after this disappointment, Wagga, relying on his speed, went early in the morning to the pool of Gu, the abode of a great snake, which was the scourge and terror of Boo. No one else would approach within a mile of it. But Wagga, when the python was lazy, liked to tease it into chasing him, and to mock it when it returned, baffled, to its lair.

All the way to the pool the young man was thinking about a new law enacted by the King, acting as high justice of the state. The case would seem a curious one outside of Africa. A rich man's child had been devoured by a crocodile, and the crocodile was afterwards killed by a hunter, who refused to give up the child's beads and trinkets, found inside the reptile. The father claimed that they were his, and the cause was tried before the King. The hunter's counsel argued that untamed animals being the property of no man, they and all that was in them belonged to their captor. Moreover, he reasoned, savage beasts were the recognized enemies of mankind, and

according to the law of nations the ownership of goods ceased, or rather changed, the moment they were captured by the enemy. There were cases on record, he said, where honest men found coins or gems inside fishes, and he had yet to hear of any finder inquiring who was the owner of such an article. This reasoning had seemed sound to Boo-bee. With the assent of his council, who were growing hungry, he was graciously pleased to issue the following decree:—

“ TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN!

“ WHEREAS, it is desirable further to encourage the destruction of noxious animals within our domains, Be it therefore decreed, that now, and henceforth, such animals, with all their appurtenances, fixtures, and contents, belong, without reserve, unto their slayers.

BOO-BEE, King, Commander, Priest, and Judge.

“ His X mark.”

This proclamation had been written by the chief soothsayer in hieroglyphics, and duly filed among the official papyrus leaves.

Arrived at Gu, Wagga had some trouble in tempting the serpent from its native pool. It was not torpid, but it had a memory and was sensitive to sells. However, after bearing stones and taunts with resignation for an hour, it yielded to rage and hunger, and, with a hiss that sounded like a waterspout bursting on the sea, it gave chase. At first the audacious Wagga had to strain every muscle to keep ahead of it; but after a mile's race its speed slackened, and soon Wagga, who was particularly anxious to lure it further, had to offer it extra inducements to go on. For some miles he let it keep unpleasantly close to him. Once it came even within snapping distance of him, and he only saved himself by bounding like a gazelle.

He fled in the direction of the Maiden's Well. This was a deep pond of limpid water, where Nulla, accompanied by her nurse, used to disport herself each sunny day before her noon siesta. It was nearly six miles from the python's lair, and Wagga guessed that the

water-snake, after rolling and wriggling so far across the hot sand, would stay and rest there till the cool of the evening.

It wanted three hours of noon when wicked Wagga reached this well, and putting on a fine spurt, made it clear that he had only been trifling with his pursuer all the way. The baffled serpent plunged into its favorite element and was glad to hide its shame and vexation at the bottom of the deepest hole.

Then the crafty Wagga went back to the capital and paid a visit to the king. The hospitable Boo-bee sent two of his wives to gather dates to set before his guest, for, I need hardly observe, dignity forbids the monarch of Boo from climbing a tree himself. While eating her father's fruit, Wagga saluted the unsuspecting Princess Nulla, as she tripped forth to her bath. She was smiling, and so, I am shocked to relate, was Wagga!

He had been chatting gayly with Boo-bee for over three hours when the latter observed that Nulla was absent longer than usual. But the king did not seem very uneasy for another hour. Then, when neither Nulla nor her trusty attendant had appeared, the anxiety of the father overcame the pride of the sovereign, and Boo-bee actually climbed a tree, to see for himself if the ladies were coming.

Not a human being was visible in the direction of their bathing-place.

Thoroughly alarmed, the king started with ten spearmen to seek his daughter. Wagga went with them, bearing a broad-bladed axe. It would be useful for cutting fuel, he said, if they had to camp out. As they neared the pond, his superior speed carried him ahead of the party. The confiding Boo-bee was filled with gratitude at his zeal.

An immense snake lay, gorged and torpid, at the side of the Maiden's Well. Its head was on the bank, but its long body grew dim and dimmer to the sight in the deepening water. A blow of

Wagga's axe severed the head of the sleeping monster, and the spear-men dragged its writhing carcass from the pond. A groan burst from the unhappy father, as he pointed to a swelling on the reptile just about the length of his daughter. The nature of the tragedy was indeed clear. The python had swallowed the girl while she was swimming, and had then attacked her nurse, as the latter was scaling the rocks where her body lay. Whether from want of appetite or want of room, the snake had made no attempt to swallow the old woman, who had probably died of fright.

As the younger men opened the serpent, Boo-bee sat on the rocks, nursing his sorrow with tropical intensity. He wrung his hands; he beat his breast; he tore his hair (to a more moderate extent); he cursed the day he was born; he lamented over and over again that he had not died instead of his well-beloved.

When the fair Nulla's inanimate form had been extricated from its dreadful tomb, a spearman, a kinsman of the princess, suggested that some relative ought to take charge of her diamond and other ornaments.

"Pardon me," said Wagga, striding in front of him and rudely tearing the diamond from Nulla's neck, "this is mine by the law; *I* killed the snake, and the trinkets are *treasure-trove*!"

"Take it from him!" shouted the King's kinsman.

The spearmen seized him with a will, being disgusted at such an exhibition of avarice at such a time.

"I appeal to the King!" roared Wagga.

"The laws of Boo," sobbed the sovereign, answering the appeal, and just even in his indignation, "alter not at the pleasure of any man. Take the baubles, ungenerous youth! Go, and leave me to my dead."

"Excuse me, O just King," said wicked Wagga; "you don't quite see the extent of my humble claim. This young lady's body, too, is

part of the 'appurtenances and contents' of my snake, and therefore belongs to me by your own righteous decree. If anybody wants to buy her I'm willing to trade."

And the heartless Wagga, delighted at his own sharpness, actually chuckled in a ghastly sort of way.

"She wouldn't give me her hand," he exclaimed, "and now her whole body is mine!"

"NEVER!" murmured the Pearl of Boo, slowly opening her eyes. And at intervals she gasped out the same word three or four times over, as if her mind was quite made up upon the subject.

She had not been dead. The serpent was so huge that it had swallowed her without breaking a single bone, and had not bitten her at all.

The legal murderer started back from the ghost of his victim, as he thought. His hair rose, his jaw fell, the diamond dropped from his grasp, and he fell dead.

But the enraptured Boo-bee did not see this sudden retribution. He was running to his daughter's side.

"My only child!" he cried, extending his arms.

"My only father!" she murmured, extending hers.

"My pearl, my pride, my treasure-trove!" ejaculated the fond parent, hugging his daughter—once—before she was washed.

For some days afterwards the good old king quite forgot his dignity, and would frolic and pelt his courtiers with cocoa-nuts, as in the mischievous days of his boyhood.

The escape of the Princess Nulla was more than a nine days' wonder in Boo. Her admirers maintained that the python had swallowed her without squeezing her to a pulp merely because she was tender enough as she was. Others thought it had gulped her right down in its hurry to get at the old nurse, of whose good taste it must have formed too flattering an estimate, as they inferred from

its leaving her uneaten after catching her. A serpent charmer insisted that the snake, with the cunning and revengefulness of its species, had seen through Wagga's little game, and had swallowed Nulla with unusual gentleness and care on purpose to disappoint its enemy and insulter.

"Them critters," remarked the charmer, who spoke a charming *patois*, "is bound to take you in one way if they can't take you in t'other way."

XXXVIII.

AN UNINVITED BALLOONIST.

IT once struck me that ballooning would be the pleasantest way of traveling in my business, lifting me above the sands, beasts, and barbarians of the desert. So I had a big balloon constructed with a patent rudder, guaranteed to steer against any ordinary wind. One day, when the breeze blew from the sea, I embarked, thinking my return voyage would be plain sailing, owing to the patent rudder and to the figuring of a man of science, who proved quite clearly that an upper current of air set steadily from the desert to the ocean. But either the upper current of air or the patent rudder went all wrong, and I was landed near Morocco, from which city I made my way back by sea, with the loss of four months' time, my whole cargo of feathers, and every shilling I had taken with me.

For the future I confined my ballooning to short voyages.

On one of these occasions my supply of water had nearly run out, when, noticing a stream, as I thought, I descended and made fast

the balloon. What I fancied was a brook, turned out, however, to be a wady—that is, one of the dried-up water-courses of the Sahara. As I turned back empty-handed, I saw a prettily-spotted animal, which proved to be a baby-leopard, playing like a kitten in the wady. I caught the creature and hoisted it into the car by a rope. Then, as no living thing was in sight, I was leisurely preparing to launch my air-ship once more. Two of the three ropes which secured it to the earth were already cut, and I was turning to cut the third, when I was horrified at seeing the mother leopard creeping toward me, noiselessly but swiftly, and with a revengeful gleam in her eyes.

She was then nearly forty feet away, and I had enough presence of mind left to lose no time in cutting the last rope. The liberated balloon rose majestically in the air—about a second too late. While I was severing the rope the leopardess had reduced her distance, and when I had finished she was poised for a spring. Up she bounded, the embodiment of cruelty and grace, her paws outstretched, her tail stiff, her jaws distended, her eyes flashing. Her fore claws only just reached the bottom of the rising car; but they grasped it like grim death, and she soon clambered into the car, nearly capsizing it in the process. Then she stood a moment over her sprawling cub and gave a roar, whether a roar of greeting to the cub or of menace to me I did not even try to guess. Just at that time I was going up the ropes which secured the car to the balloon, in a way that would have won the prize at any gymnastic exhibition.

In a few seconds I was clinging to the netting of the balloon and glancing uneasily down at “the bearded pard.” When I had taken in a junior “pard” I had no idea he would so soon be followed by a senior “pard,” whose restless activity threatened, in low but expressive parlance, to “bust the whole concern” and lead to the sudden dissolution of the firm and all its members.

A glance showed me there was no *immediate* danger from the

leopard. She was now quite as alarmed as I was. Her first movement when she perceived the earth receding beneath her was to grasp her cub in her teeth and hasten to the edge of the car, as if about to spring to the ground. But the height was too great, and, abandoning her intention, she dropped the cub and whined in abject terror.

I had now time to reflect. Even if I wished to make the balloon descend, in the hope that the frightened leopard might leap to the ground at the first opportunity, I had not the means of doing so from where I was. To go down into the car while the leopard remained there alive seemed like putting my head in a lion's mouth, and I had no means of killing the beast, for my fire-arms were also in the car. Meantime, though I had secured a foothold in the netting, the strain on the muscles of my hands and arms was great, and I could not support it forever. At last I drew my knife, which, in my hurry, I had luckily shoved into my pocket unclashed, and climbing around the base of the balloon, began severing the ropes which attached the car to it. As the car swung downward, supported by the last two ropes, the young leopard fell to earth; but its mother, becoming suddenly conscious of what I was doing, sprang upwards and struggled hard to climb the single rope that remained uncut—for the other, half severed, had yielded when she sprang. It was a trying moment, but the knife was sharp and divided the rope in time.

Down went the car and the leopard after it, still grasping the rope with her claws. Sometimes the car was uppermost, sometimes the beast. In spite of my own perilous position, I could not help watching this terrific see-saw in the air, until beast and car, after shrinking to mere specks, were dashed to pieces on the ground. Fortunately for me, my eyes were accustomed to dizzy heights.

I had provided against the too rapid ascent of the balloon, when

lightened of so great a weight, by cutting a small hole in its side. But this proved insufficient to stop its upward progress. So I made other small holes, with great caution—for my only chance of a successful descent was to let the gas escape by slow degrees. My task was not an easy one, for the balloon, cut loose from its ballast, now lay over considerably on one side, with me beneath. The strain on my hands had consequently grown greater. However, I eased it somewhat by getting one leg inside the netting, and soon I was glad to perceive, from the gently upward direction of the loose ropes, that I was beginning to descend. The motion grew more and more rapid, and though I managed to reduce its rapidity for a time by cutting off all the swinging ropes within my reach, I should probably have been maimed, or killed outright, had I not alighted on the long, feathery leaves of a date-palm, in the centre of a beautiful cluster of these trees.

After refreshing myself with some dates, and filling my pockets with more, I struck into the desert to seek the wreck of the car, and especially my rifle and revolver, without which I had no hopes of reaching civilization again. My ruined balloon did me a last service, as it limped over the tops of the palms: it enabled me to tell the direction of the wind, which I could not have discovered otherwise, for it was nearly a dead calm. By going directly against the wind I knew I must draw near the objects of my search. I found the shattered car and the remains of the leopard by it; but rifle and pistol were bent and broken beyond any possibility of use or repair.

But I must tell you how I got home another time, for I am tired of talking now.

XXXIX.

A TWO-LEGGED STEED.

“YOU must tell us how you got home,” cried the boys next evening, cutting off the Major’s attempted retreat from the tea-table.

What must be, must be, he said, reseating himself. Well; when I found my firearms smashed, I was dumbfounded for a minute or so. Then, as the sun was just setting, I looked over the wreck of the car and picked out a thin rope and the skin in which I used to carry my water, and which still held about half a gallon. I built a fire out of the remnants of the car and its contents, and, stretching my feet towards it, fell asleep almost instantaneously. I was too tired to make any plans.

Next morning I was awakened by a sharp pain on my right cheek and, opening my eyes, I saw a vulture perched upon my breast and preparing to have a second and more satisfactory peck at my face, if I should happily prove to be dead or mortally wounded. I jumped up with a shout, which scared the cowardly bird and a whole flock of his mates that were feeding on the carcass of the leopard.

The course of the balloon had been nearly due east, and, as well as I could guess at its average speed, I was not much more than a hundred miles from the coast. So, after breakfasting on the rest of the dates and a small allowance of water I took Horace Greeley’s advice to young men, and went west.

“How could you tell which side was the west?” asked Bill.

The sun, my boy, very kindly got up that morning at about the usual time and in the usual place. And during the whole of the first day I was guided by a distant clump of trees which lay but little out of my course.

I reached the clump half broiled and without a drop of water, having used up most of my supply in moistening my head to keep off sunstroke. However, the trees were date-palms, and grew over a brook, as these trees commonly do. So I found an abundance of food, drink, and fuel, and slept as soundly and safely as the night before.

I started into the desert early next morning in better spirits ; for I was some twenty-five miles nearer home, and had not, so far, met a beast of prey, though I had heard one roaring near my fire.

About noon I observed an animal behind me, but too far away to recognize. Some minutes later I looked round again and saw it in about the same position. This looked as if it was following me. I felt uncomfortable and glanced back a third time. It was a little nearer now, and I perceived, to my alarm, that its color was tawny. Wishing to know the worst, I halted. To my surprise, the animal halted too. Its motion had been stealthy and cat-like ; but now its pose was bold and commanding, as it raised his head and contemplated me.

If I had any doubts remaining, they were soon gone, for the beast lifted its head higher, and proved its identity by roaring as only lions can roar. I had self-control enough not to turn and flee at this terrible summons. On the contrary, I looked the lion steadily in the face for some minutes and then calmly resumed my journey.

As I had hoped, he did not charge, but continued to follow at the same interval. When I halted again, he halted too ; when I walked he walked after me. He apparently meant to attack me in the dark, when lions are boldest.

Several times that day I was on the point of ending my fearful suspense by rushing at my pursuer and forcing him either to fly or to eat me for his dinner instead of for his supper. But each time some new hope would spring up in my breast, and I would trudge on still. Once I remembered Androclus and hoped that the lion might tread upon a thorn. Another time I thought of a man in a similar plight with myself, who, happily combining presence of mind with absence of body, raised his hat and cloak on a stick, and induced a deluded lion to spring at it and fall down a convenient precipice. Time and again I hoped for trees, and time and again I asked myself the conundrum, "Why is a lion like an oyster?" and comforted myself with the answer, "Because neither can climb a tree." Yes; if I were only up a tree, I would fear the lion no more than any oyster of the same size and weight.

I think I could have climbed anything just then—a branchless palm, the North Pole, a genealogical tree. But I could see nothing higher than myself, except the sun.

At last I came to a slight rise in the boundless waste. From the summit I saw neither rock nor tree. Two cassavas were in sight, but they were only stunted shrubs, a few feet high. The sun was at the horizon, and the lion had lessened his distance visibly.

I felt the courage of despair, and was about to turn and tempt the wild beast to kill me then or never, when I saw something rise out of the long shadow cast by the cassavas in the setting sun. It proved to be a large ostrich, which had been frightened by some sight or sound at the other side of the bushes, for it came straight towards me, using wings and legs, as ostriches do when hurried or alarmed.

In a moment I had formed a plan of escape. I headed the huge bird and shouted at it. It fled in bewilderment back to the cassavas, where, according to its silly custom, it thrust its head into the leaves

and halted, in the belief that not to see involves not to be seen.

"But, uncle," said Bill, "don't late travelers deny that ostriches have any such habit?"

Modern ostriches, answered the Major, have reformed, like other bipeds. But mine was an ostrich of the old school. He clung to the traditional faults and virtues of a past age. He wanted no reform bill, or reformed bill either.

There was a double chase, continued the Major, resuming his narrative, for no sooner had I begun to run after the ostrich than the lion, echoing my shout with compound interest, started in pursuit. To a looker-on the race would have shown strange contrast;—the flapping, waddling, frightened ostrich; the man running silently for life; the roaring lion, with successive bounds, hastening after his prey.

I was a good hand at leap-frog when I was at school. I had often leaped on to the sixth or seventh back at the old game of "High Cockalorum." But I had never had so high "a back" given me before, as that now offered by the unconscious ostrich. Still, I never had so much encouragement to distinguish myself at any game before, for a hungry lion had never been the next player behind me!

Mustering all my strength, I sprang into the air, tipping the ostrich's tail with my fingers as I flew over it. In a moment I was seated comfortably on the back of the bird, holding tightly to its neck with both hands. The huge creature, terrified no less by the roaring of the lion, now hardly fifty yards behind, than by the mysterious weight on its back, hastily raised its head from the cassava bush and went off at a pace which soon distanced our pursuer.

We traveled all night, and on the following afternoon struck the coast some miles below the trading-post, which we reached at sundown.

"And what did the ostrich eat on the way?" asked Bill.

Chiefly money, answered the Major.

“What! Money?”

Yes; money. I suppose you are aware that ostriches are fond of eating stones and metals.

“So I have heard,” said Bill.

Well, I thought a few coins might be a pleasant change for my ostrich, and I had a quantity of gold coins in a belt to provide against emergencies, as my habit was when ballooning. So I threw him a sovereign, which he swallowed eagerly; then an eagle, which he seemed to enjoy still more. At least he ran to it and stooped for it with more haste, whether because it was a larger coin, or because it was of American manufacture, I am unable to decide.

“How did you get him to go in one direction all the time?” queried Bill.

By making a noose on my rope and lassoing his neck, keeping the ends of the rope in my hands to act as reins. I put two knots on the rope to prevent the noose from getting too tight and strangling the bird; yet I managed to make it mighty disagreeable for him when he tried to alter his course. While the coins lasted I had no trouble at all; for, whenever he wanted to turn, I just threw one straight ahead, and by the time the silly bird had reached it he had quite forgotten his desire to turn.

“What a lot it cost to feed that ostrich!” cried little Bob.

Bless your soul, said the Major, it didn’t cost a cent. If I never got home, the money, you see, was no use to me; if I did, I knew I could get it back. I hated to shoot that ostrich; but times were bad, and I could not afford to wait and find out whether the bird would lay golden eggs.

You will find some of its feathers in your aunt’s bonnet; I brought them home as proofs of my adventure. Their yellowish tinge is manifestly owing to the large amount of gold swallowed by my two-legged steed.



NIP AND TUCK—THE TWO-LEGGED STEED.

XL.

HOW TO LIE.

“**D**ID a beast ever take one of your men from the camp-fire,” asked Bob, “the way the man-eater ran away with Gordon Cumming’s man?”

No, my boy, said the Major; but then our way of bivouacking was different from Mr. Cumming’s. We used to sleep with our heads towards the fire and our feet turned outwards. This posture is not so comfortable as the ordinary one, it is true—especially toward morning, when your feet are liable to grow cold. But it is safer for various reasons.

First, when you see a beast creeping towards you, you have a rest ready and can fire as you lie, like a Wimbledon or Creedmoor marksman, with your rifle leaning between your toes. Then, if the animal is wounded and charges, you are in the best possible attitude for defence. Your legs have twice the strength and twice the endurance of your arms. Besides, they are armed, on hunting expeditions, with heavy boots, which aid you both offensively and defensively. Again, at the beginning of the tussle, the enemy is out of reach of your vital parts, while you are within reach of his. You can hit his face, but he cannot hit yours without first carrying your exterior defences. A bleeding nose in the first round, you know, is very discouraging to the receiver and equally cheering to the giver.

If the assailant were a lion, and you missed him, you would likely

be a "goner," feet in or feet out—though the rest would, of course, improve your chances of taking deadly aim. But with lighter beasts, a pair of armed heels, both available at the same time, are weapons not to be despised.

A she-leopard once sprang at me as I lay in my improved attitude before my fire, after I had merely grazed her with a bullet in the dark. I doubled up my legs and countered heavily on her nob with both feet. The double kick knocked her back nearly as far as she had sprung. Then she leaped again, this time a little higher and further, hoping to get past my heels and at my head. But I raised my feet with great rapidity, standing on my shoulder blades, and gave her a little uphoped-for assistance—just enough to carry her nicely into the fire. After which she went home.

A small party might resist a pack of wolves by lying shoulder to shoulder on their backs, revolvers in hand, feet outwards, kicking with only one foot at a time, and keeping the other in reserve, like the bayonets of the rear rank in a hollow square which is about to receive cavalry.

This formation is still better for repelling cannibals, as I can testify. A number of them completely surprised our party one night by our campfire, and, if they had only kept in their war-yell, might have captured every one of us. As it was, being thoroughly trained in the new tactics, each of us awoke with a kick which electrified the nearest man-eater. I smashed a pair of incisors belonging to one big-toothed brave and permanently spoiled his relish for boy. In two minutes we had sent the whole tribe away to the dentist. On our side we only lost one man, and he had no nails in his boots. Our loss might have been considerable had the attacking party used missiles.

"And why didn't they?" asked Bill.

Cannibals, explained the Major, prefer capturing to killing

they don't want to have too large a stock of meat on hand at one time.

I had noticed in my school days, the Major went on to say, that to lie on one's back and kick up (spinning round on one's shoulder blades, should the enemy attempt to turn the position) was the only system of military tactics that gave a small boy any sort of a chance against a big one. But I never fancied then that the dodge would work satisfactorily against so very big a bully as a gorilla.

Whether the gorilla I refer to was any relation of Du Chaillu's first acquaintance, I cannot say; but anyhow, he conducted himself quite as rudely. In fact, he started from a bush in front of me, stood right in my path, and proceeded to introduce himself without the slightest formality.

"Ubbubboo," observed the ugly ape.

"Ubbubboo, yourself!" I retorted, assuming a bold front.

If the word meant "How do you do?" it seemed just as well to return the civility; but if, as I somewhat suspected, it was a term of abuse, it only served him right to tell him, "You're another!"

In a twinkling he jumped at me. I could hardly have cocked my rifle, even if I had not just discharged it; I had only time to throw myself on my back and receive him with a tremendous left-heeler in the pit of the stomach. At the same instant his heavy hand descended numbingly on my thigh. Had I foolishly squared up to him with my fists his blow would have reached a more vulnerable spot, and perhaps have fractured my jaw, or an arm, or a rib. But thigh-bones are hard to break.

My kick caught him in the wind and nearly doubled him up. He put his hand to the part affected, and looked pained. He muttered "Ubbubboo" in a whisper that was pathetic. Even a gorilla is helpless while he is "winded." In the brief respite I leaped to my feet and stood facing him. Soon a long-drawn sigh showed that his

breath and strength were about to return. So I had to hit him in the wind again, and again he stood gaping and bent up and powerless. This gave me time to reload and cock my gun. Then, feeling tolerably safe, I walked away, giving him a parting dig in the wind to keep him quiet, for his own sake. I gladly spared his life, for I rightly guessed that he would not care to follow me, and I was ready for him if he should. Besides, I felt mean enough already at hitting the poor fellow below the belt.

I rather flatter myself that I am the first naturalist who ever used these simple but effective tactics. It does not appear that either Buffon, or Cuvier, or the Rev. D. Livingstone, ever tackled an ape in this particular attitude.

XLI.

FISHING FOR A LION.

ANOTHER of my feather expeditions led me to the southern extremity of the desert, into the zone of the baobabs and custard-apple trees. I was doing a day's canoeing on a lake which touched three or four oases that I had to visit for trading purposes. I had grounded my canoe on the southern shore to inspect the largest baobab I had ever seen. It stood in solitary state on a sandy plain, close to the water's edge. Taking a lasso with me, for the double purpose of measuring the trunk and noosing some of the fruit, I found the tree to be about a hundred feet in girth.

"A hundred feet!" echoed Bill, with the air of a critic making mental notes.

Yes, said the Major, meekly—*nearly* as large as the baobabs seen by old Cadamosto in the fifteenth century. Forty feet up the stem my baobab split into two colossal branches, and these, in their turn, sent forth boughs that, by themselves, would be good-sized trees. From these sprang a forest of smaller branches, clothed with large palmated leaves, covering an acre of ground with their shade. At the roots was a cavity with an entrance at one side only.

I had lassoed one of the yellow-brown, oval fruits, about eleven inches long, and was poising my lasso to snare another equally fine specimen, when I heard a distant roar, and saw an animal, which

proved to be a lioness, coming quickly from the desert. Answering growls from the hollow in the tree soon showed me the pretty pickle I was in. The hollow was tenanted by a family of young lions, and the lioness was hastening to protect her cubs.

It was too late to retreat to the canoe, and it seemed rather difficult to climb a tree with a very smooth bark and a girth of a hundred feet, and with not a single branch that stooped within four yards of the ground. However, necessity is the mother of invention, and, having nothing to help me but my lasso, my thoughts naturally turned to it for aid.

There was a stunted and leafless bough some fifteen feet beneath the main fork. A stronger and more healthful companion bough left the parent stem at the same point, and, reaching upwards, was lost to view in the maze of light green foliage overhead. I lassoed the stunted limb and, drawing the noose tight, began to ascend the hanging rope with some misgivings. Being in the best condition, and accustomed to climbing, I feared the branch's weakness much more than my own.

Before I was half way up, the tawny body of the lioness appeared in the air, her head as high as my knees; and she turned almost upside down in her convulsive attempt to seize me. Unused to such perpendicular jumping, she had misjudged her first spring, and before she made her second I was far above her reach. For a moment indeed, I seemed to lose control over my muscles, and with a strange fascination I watched her as she descended to the ground, alighting on her feet, as cats somehow manage to do, whatever may have been their posture in the air. But I soon regained my senses, and made the rest of the ascent without pausing once or even thinking of the insecurity of my support. I had some difficulty in grasping and getting upon the sound branch, which was as thick as my body. But once on it, I had no trouble in mounting higher and

transferring myself to a larger, horizontal branch. On this I rested for a while.

I had now a good opportunity of studying the habits of a lion family at home, for the male lion soon appeared, dragging an antelope, which the young ones devoured—not without some fights for the titbits, as I guessed from the growlings. The parent lions, I found, generally spent the day at home, except when they went singly to the lake, or when the mother escorted her cubs for a ramble or to drink. At night one or the other of the old ones used to go out hunting; but one always remained on guard, for they never forgot my presence in the tree.

“Why, how long were you there, uncle?” asked Bill.

Just eleven days, answered the Major.

“And what did you eat?”

The fruit of the baobab, the “monkey-bread.” It has a sourish, but rather pleasant taste.

“And what did you drink?”

Water; there was a natural tank of it at the main fork of the tree, which, like most old baobabs, had begun to decay *downwards*. Happily, with a fruit diet, I did not need much water, for it was far from nice.

“And where did you sleep?” pursued Bill.

There were several large horizontal limbs, and one of these was nearly flat in one place. I used to sleep on this, making myself fast to a higher branch with my lasso, which I had hauled up into the tree on the first day.

Until the tenth day it never struck me that the said lasso might enable me to run the blockade. But that night the lion went out hunting later than usual, and, though the moon was nearly full, I was obliged to defer my scheme for want of light.

On the following night it was the lioness's turn to hunt. She

left the den before sundown, for her mate had been unsuccessful the night before, and it was absolutely necessary to replenish the larder. The necessity which made her go out early would probably ensure her absence for some time. No sooner did I think she was out of hearing than I let down the noose of my lasso to the top of the den, and drew the lion forth by making a little noise. As he was re-entering the hollow I tried to snare his tail, without success at first. Three times I enticed him into the open air in vain. The fourth time, just as the daylight was giving out, I caught him and the tug of war began.

When he first felt his tail gripped he lashed it angrily, which only served to make the slip-noose tight. Then he commenced to pull in earnest.

“Then, like a noble courser
When first he feels the rein,
The furious *lion* struggled hard
And tossed his tawny mane.”

He roared and raged and ramped so that I feared the rope would snap. He even managed to redeem part of his tail from confinement; but at the tuft which ended it the noose finally stopped.

I had of course taken care to tie the upper end of my lasso to a branch, not wishing to put myself against the king of beasts in a tugging match. At first I merely sat astride on a branch and let him tire himself. After a while, however, I began to draw in the rope, whenever it became slack, and to wind it round a stout knob which I had prepared with my pocket-knife to serve as a sort of belaying-pin, for I had no reel suited for this peculiar kind of angling. It was essential to shorten his tether somewhat, to prevent his reaching me when I should drop to the ground. Besides as the rope became shorter and more perpendicular, he would be more cramped in his

movements and have less chance of breaking it with a spring. Bit by bit I drew it in and wound it round the knob, until the lion could hardly move a yard in any direction. At last, taking him off his guard, with a vast effort, I jerked his hind feet some inches off the ground and put a last coil round my belaying-pin, leaving the beast supported by his fore-legs and tail.

While he was in this constrained posture, the behavior of the cubs would have been laughable if it were not pitiable. His roars had roused them some time ago, and now, misconstruing the sad plight of their parent, they began to frolic around him. Their alarm in fact had changed to amusement at the unlionlike attitude of their papa. They thought he was playing monkey, or some other game in which sober lions forget their dignity to please their little ones. According to their light he was only hanging on by his tail to a bush-rope, like a prehensile-tailed ape.

His vain efforts to reach me, when I dropped to the ground a few feet from him, certainly seemed ludicrous. But I did not laugh. I never laugh at a hero forced by disaster to figure as a clown. Besides, I actually thought he would get loose when I made for the canoe with his favorite cub under my arm. His roaring grew terrific—beating Stentor and the Howling Monkeys of Brazil. And all the young lions now took parts in the chorus.

Just as I was launching the canoe, this leonine telephone was answered from afar by the angry voice of the lioness. She might have been too late to save the cub had I wished to test what a lioness can do in the swimming line under strong provocation. But under the circumstances mercy prevailed, and I left the little one behind. When I was a few rods out from the shore, an animal bounded down the bank, seized the cub in its mouth and hastened back towards the baobab. Whether it was the lion or the lioness I could not discern, for the short twilight was now over.

"But uncle, I thought there were no lakes found in the desert," commented Bill, at the end of the Major's story.

Nor was this lake ever "found" before I found it, said the Major.

"But," pursued Bill, "have any late explorers come across it?"

Not very likely, I reckon: the whole Sahara, you know, was once an inland sea, as its sand attests. The lake I saw was the last part to be soaked up, and it was drying fast when I was there. In fact my canoe was some yards farther from the water at the end than at the beginning of my sojourn in the tree, and the delay in launching her caused by this circumstance was near proving fatal to me.

XLII.

A CASTLE IN THE AIR.

"A LARGE thing in trees that baobab you spent eleven days in," remarked Bill next evening, closing the eye that was farthest from his uncle.

A pretty good size for Africa, returned the Major; but the "big tree" of California—*Sequoia gigantea* they call it in the books—is just as thick and several times as tall. Soon after my return to America I was up in one, house and all.

Here Bill shut his sleepest eye again.

Perhaps you don't know that I tried mining in California when I was a lad. I built a ranch between two "big trees," and worked a claim, and found an ounce of gold one day and lost it the same night, and for the rest of my mining days could hum a tune or enjoy a joke in the presence of a dozen highwaymen. So after a few months I "vamoosed the ranch" and went to Africa.

Twenty years later, however, when I again found myself in Cali-

fornia, with a little money in my pocket, I felt like seeing the old spot. The diggings, I was told, had been abandoned years ago, and the whole neighborhood had become a solitude. Some miles from the place I found the mule path impassable, and was forced to finish my pilgrimage on foot.

I had already sighted the clump of "big trees" where my hut stood, and had noticed the ruins of some other huts beyond, when I heard an Indian war-whoop, and saw a number of braves galloping their horses down the gulch behind. As a matter of course our mine had a gulch in its vicinity. It had all the belongings of a first-class mine except the gold.

My only chance was to gain my old hut before I was shot. Arrived there I could bolt the door, if the bolt remained, and perhaps pick off the Indians one by one.

But when I got beneath the "big trees" there was no vestige of a hut there, and so I hastily decided upon climbing a tree. As I did not fancy doing so with my rifle loaded, I first brought down a redskin who had already fired at me. I knew, however, that some one of the others was sure to sight me soon through some opening in the foliage either from the ground or an adjoining tree. I was barely fifteen feet from the ground when the first of them reached the clump and sprang from their horses. But at that moment I saw a welcome sight.

There was the open door of my old hut on a level with me a few yards out from the stem of the sequoia! The hut was hanging between two large branches, partially supported by a smaller one beneath. I popped into it and slammed the door, without stopping to consider how the mischief it had got there.

I counted eight redskins below. I bagged four of them through holes in the floor and walls—"vents" I used to call them in the old mining days. Then the rest resolved to go to their wigwams. I

sent a couple of bullets after them, which materially aided two of them in keeping their resolution.

I was now able to take a leisurely look at my old cabin and to find out the secret of its startling rise in the world. It had been built between two sequoias, as I said before. Each big tree had got an arm under the eaves. Between them they had gradually lifted it from the ground and suspended it in the air, like a sedan-chair. Almost hidden by the leaves, I had not noticed it from below.

XLIII.

OUR CHROMO.

It was a bright thought on the part of our Feather Company to tempt the natives with the untried allurements of the chromo. They were growing weary of Paris beads, and plaster-of-Paris candies, and the coming of our grand "Beatrice"—44 inches by 34—was greeted with enthusiasm. A wagon-load of feathers was justly deemed a small price for this superb masterpiece.

Only a few copies remain for sale at the office of the Metropolitan Feather Company. They are a little cheaper now. Birds pecked at the original painting, mistaking the lips for cherries, or the whole head for a squash,—I forget which. The holes thus made, which alone prevent the picture from being perfect, are faithfully reproduced in our "Beatrice."

"Beatrice what?" asked little Bob. "What was her other name?"

Whether the young person, said the Major, is Dante's Beatrice, or Thackeray's Beatrice, or Beatrice Cenci, or the Princess Beatrice, I never knew. She usually accommodates herself to circumstances. Customers can have their choice. I only know she is a 'wondrous creation,' and that the Feather Company, in offering her at the very

low figure of fifty cents a copy, is simply rushing into bankruptcy out of pure amiability and love of art. All families of culture have this chromo."

"None of our friends have that I know of," remarked Bill.

You may not *see* it in their houses, it is true, rejoined the Major. Only vulgarians expose the ideal beauty of our "Beatrice," to be gaped at by everyday visitors.

One chief offered me his second-best wife, and another the fattest of his captives, for this marvel of art. But I preferred selling for feathers or gold. Hearing at a village of the Booboos that a neighboring chief possessed a quantity of that metal, I walked over to see him, taking only one servant, who carried a number of chromos and a pot of paste in a wheelbarrow. Frames were too heavy to carry, and we had found that pasting the pictures on smooth logs came quite up to the Booboo standard of decorative art.

We secured the chief's whole stock of gold for less than half the chromos, and turned our steps back to the village. Crossing a deep stream, my poor servant, who had poised the wheelbarrow on his head, was cut in two by a crocodile. I caught the barrow in time and reached the other bank in safety.

I had now to pass a small forest. About half way through, a herd of five elephants chased me. I hastily pasted five chromos to as many trees, and fled onwards with my precious barrow-load. Each elephant, as I had hoped, furiously charged one of the "counterfeit presentments" of "Beatrice," and imbedded his tusks in the tree. Chromos have charms to catch the savage beast. Please don't interrupt me now, Bill—you can look up the quotation afterwards.

Further on, in the open, I met a hungry lion. I remembered Una's lion, and thought it might be a good thing to stick a chromo on my back. But this beast was hard-hearted, and was not a bit softened by the innocent look of "Beatrice." On the contrary, he

roared more hungrily than before, seeing so very tempting a morsel, and doubtless resolved to eat my pretty side the first. Finding I could not get away from him with my valuable burden, I lay down, cocked my rifle, used the wheelbarrow as a rest, and scored a bull's eye. You see I was ready to fight when I was put to it, though I generally preferred running away—out of kindness to the brute creation.

I now found that my excitement had made me lose my way. I thought, however, that I recognized the hill that overhangs the Booboo village whence I had started in the morning. As this hill was several miles distant and it was just nightfall, I deemed it safest to pass the night where I happened to be then. A flat limb of a baobab, which stood beside a clear pond, offered me security and rest. I left the gold in the barrow, for I had no fear of thieves, but took my remaining chromos up to my roost, lest they might be damaged by wild beasts.

Two of the chromos, I found, had become pasted together, back to back, through the upsetting of the paste-pot.

The pond turned out to be a lions' watering place; and after midnight four of these animals lay down to sleep beneath my tree. This might have proved extremely awkward, for I had only a couple of cartridges left. But "Beatrice" again helped me out of the scrape.

I made a temporary frame out of four rods, which I bound together at the corners. In this frame I set my double chromo, making holes in its side, and tying it to the rod frame with strips of my handkerchief. During the night I wandered about the branches of the huge tree, until I found one long and straight, and slender enough for my purpose. This I cut, and to its end I hung the upper side of the frame.

As day dawned I lowered the two-faced chromo to the ground, in a straight line between two lions who were sleeping some yards apart.

Then I coughed loudly. They awoke, and a tender young creature met the hungry gaze of each. They took a few short, stealthy steps, and then sprang together. I gave the pole a quick jerk. Up jumped "Beatrice" unscathed; and her would-be devourers met each other in mid air. The meeting was a cruel disappointment to each, and neither lion forgave his fellow for not being a young lady. They ramped and roared in a way that would have charmed Tippoo Sahib or the King of Oude.

After the deaths of the first two lions I passed several weary, thirsty hours before the two remaining fellows took their next snooze. Then I lowered the pole again and placed the double "Beatrice" exactly between them. This time one awoke before the other, and sprang the instant he awoke. Before I could move it he went through the chromo in magnificent style, like a circus rider leaping through a hoop. I could hardly help crying "Bravo!" as he swooped down like an ugly nightmare on his sleeping chum.

I did not see the end of this last fight. Fearing that one of the combatants might survive and still prove troublesome, I clambered down and made for the Booboo village. I arrived there safe, with my barrow and my gold, but inclined, nevertheless, to agree with the woeful Hassan in the "oriental eclogue":—

XLIV.

HEROES AT BAY.

THE boys were playing "wheelbarrow." Bob was on the floor with his face downwards and Bill was holding his brother's feet in the air and making him walk forwards on his hands.

As he noticed the odd posture of his nephews, the sallow features of the Major beamed and betrayed the birth of a thought. He settled himself comfortably in his easy chair; the boys expectantly took seats beside him; and he began, like Virgil, to sing of heroes and their feats of arms and legs. Not that he made any such announcement, for he eschewed introductory remarks. American-like, he did not believe in printed introductions either, as a rule, thinking it better that they should be skipped by the writer than the reader.

* * * * *

We had halted on a perfectly level plain—my two trusty servants and I. Having watered our horses, we had tied the reins to some stunted shrubs (the only ones in sight) and left our rifles leaning against a branch. We were drinking and washing our parched faces and generally luxuriating in a brook a few rods away.

Our pleasure was interrupted by a terrified snort from one of the horses, and we saw the three brutes plunging and straining to get away in our direction, and glancing behind them as they struggled. Long before we could reach them they had all three snapt their reins or the stalks to which they were secured, and galloped close by us at a truly magnificent pace; they had carefully concealed their speed before—had these dark horses.

Glancing back beyond the bushes, we saw the cause of their hurry and dismay. Far away on the plain a beast was approaching us. Not in a stealthy, stalking, feline manner; but in a bounding, boisterous, straightforward style—like a British lion or traditional lion of the old school. And the King of beasts indeed it was, as an appalling roar made us presently aware. Gradually the outlines and color of a black-maned lion became defined.

I made my successive observations on the run. In fact we were all running ever since our horses had stampeded. “I galloped, Dick galloped, we galloped all three.” Not that either of my negro servants was really named Dick—one being Jumbo and the other Gumbo. But a fast line may give some idea of our travelling gait. The lion however ran faster than us all, and his form grew larger and larger, and plainer and plainer.

Not having quite recovered from a sprained ankle, I began to suffer acute pain after a time. I was now the hindmost and felt that I was the one who must be caught. Just about this time it dawned upon me that it was a base and shameful thing to run away. At first I had been running too fast to think of this. I was now purposing to appeal to the manhood of my men not to flee so ignominiously from a brute beast. I was about to suggest that, if we all stood boldly in a row, the lion would only eat one of us—even if we could not overawe him by our human eyes.

To my wonder and admiration Jumbo, *who was the foremost of us*, halted and made a similar proposal of his own accord! And Gumbo, who was close behind him, seconded it. They would not leave their lame master to be devoured, they exclaimed. Their flight, they said, was a weakness of which they were ashamed. And the nobility of their sentiments was only the more touching from the quaint broken English in which they expressed themselves.

“Nay, my faithful servants. I will *not* accept this sacrifice,” I

said or rather sobbed, for I was really thrilled by their heroic devotion. "I have faced as great dangers before and come off unscathed. Leave me to my destiny."

My words were bolder than my thoughts just then; but I would not be outdone in chivalry by two niggers.

I did not reflect that these trusted servants had taken off their shoes to wade in the brook and had not time to put them on again. Nor did I observe that their feet were burned and blistered and bleeding from the hot, rough sand. It was no time to notice such seeming trifles.

The lion was perhaps a quarter of a mile away when we halted and began our rapid colloquy. He was now hardly two hundred yards from us. Finding my negroes resolved to stay, I proposed that we should stand in a row, as far apart as possible, to further the escape of the two of us who should not be seized.

But the devotion of these gallant fellows waxed warmer and warmer. *They insisted upon standing shoulder to shoulder in front of me*, to shield me from the lion.

Such sublime self-sacrifice is sometimes catching. Seeing it was vain to reason with the heroes, I was silently debating the possibility of jumping over their shoulders or creeping between their legs at the critical moment, and proving that a pale-face can be generous too. And I was struggling hard against a mean temptation to move an adjournment and to carry out the motion behind their backs.

But I might have spared myself the struggle and the debate. When the lion was only fifty yards off, I overheard my trusted servants whispering in their native tongue, which I understood better than they fancied. They were plotting to spring nimbly apart when the lion made the final spring, leaving me in the middle for him to light on. While he was eating me they would hobble back and



A MURDEROUS INTRIGUE UPSET.

regain their guns at all events, even if they couldn't catch the horses.

This was the secret of their present chivalrous stand. And sore feet the reason of their heroic halt. And it was for these men that I had been about to bring my life and narratives to a close.

But, thank goodness, there was some time left. The lion's advance had grown a little less energetic, as if he was slightly scared or at least puzzled by our bold attitude. Yet he continued coming on.

When he was within twenty yards, I stooped down, and grasping Gumbo by the ankles from behind lifted his legs from under him, making him fall forwards on his hands. I ran him right at the lion wheelbarrow fashion—the bewildered nigger instinctively putting one hand before the other before he knew what he was about. This brought us within a spring of the lion. But the spring came from our side. For, Gumbo having now ceased to walk upon his hands, except in a backward direction, I hurled his legs forward over his head with such force, that, when they struck the ground, his body rose and he described an involuntary and convulsive somersault. This carried him two lengths ahead of me—into the very jaws of the lion, if the latter had stayed. But the beast had turned to flee.

Our "wheelbarrow" charge had brought him to a halt. Gumbo and I had seemed amalgamated into a new and ugly monster with two heads and a doubtful number of legs, not to mention a curiously piebald color. Then the curved but boldly aggressive spring of Gumbo completed the beast's dismay. It was springing a surprise upon him, with a vengeance. And he shrank back, as a lap-dog shrinks from the startling apparition of a Jack-in-the-box.

He fled; but he soon converted his flight into a detour. He wheeled round to pursue Jumbo, who was silently stealing away, quite forgetting his sore feet in his double terror at the closeness of the lion and my manifest detection of his own treachery. Finding himself pursued, Jumbo howled lustily. It was a sad disenchant-

ment for me who so lately fancied him a hero. His case, it must be admitted, was seemingly hopeless; for, though a man remarkable for agility, his feet were really in a pitiable condition then. Besides, the lion, which had begun this second chase in a half-hearted, undecided sort of way, was soon pursuing him in grim earnest. His tail and his courage rose at the unconcealed terror of Jumbo. As the savage beast seemed about to spring upon his victim, I trembled for the poor fellow, traitor though he was.

But Jumbo's end was not yet. He had gazed over his shoulder as he fled, at the involuntary gymnastics of Gumbo and their pronounced effect upon the lion; and he had not gazed in vain. In sheer desperation he now stooped sideways to the ground, and, with a rapidity never excelled even by a London street Arab, he turned six or seven consecutive "cart-wheels" before the utterly nonplussed lion. In other words, making his outstretched arms and legs the spokes, he made several complete revolutions.

For a moment the dazed lion stood agape, like a peasant boy gazing at a strange vehicle. Then he turned and fled a second time. Jumbo's capers might not have demoralized the animal by themselves; but succeeding the former and greater shock, they quite upset the nervous system of that black-maned lion. Two transformation scenes in one pantomime were too many for him."

* * * * *

"Did you recover your horses?" asked Bill.

Yes, answered Major Mendax.

"Three lame men catching their runaway horses would make a story of itself," commented Bill.

Then you must tell it yourself, said the Major. There is no story connected with *our* horses. We simply "left them alone, and they all came home, and carried their tails behind them" in a spiritless sort of way, for they had been thoroughly frightened.

“ I suppose you dismissed your servants ? ” observed Bob.

Not I. The poor wretches were punished enough by their fright, and their feet were sore for some days, especially Jumbo's. Besides, few servants would be quite reliable under the circumstances ; and then I felt myself indebted to the pair for one of my most amusing recollections.

XLV.

THE MONGOSLING.

HAVE you ever read of the Egyptian ichneumon, my boy ? I said the Major to Bob who had asked him for a story.

“ Yes,” said little Bob ; “ that's the animal which attacks snakes and, when bitten by a venomous one, runs away and eats some herb that destroys the effects of the poison. The Indian mongoose does the same. There is a picture of one in my Natural History.”

Well, there is a similar animal, only still smaller, which I have named the Mongosling and which inhabits only the wilds of the Sahara. Naturalists may say, and perhaps will say, that it inhabits only the wilds of my imagination ; some because they have not been able to discover it themselves ; others because they don't reflect that, if one wants to see what nobody else has seen, one has only to go where nobody else has gone.

This little quadruped, also, knows some secret antidote for the venom of snakes ; but as it must leave the field of battle to find the remedy, it prefers not to be bitten at all. It therefore always tries to fasten on a snake's throat in order to escape its fangs, and also, perhaps, because the throat is the most vulnerable part of a serpent next to the head.

The mongosling fearlessly attacks those large serpents which crush their prey. I have twice seen the strange little creature engaged in combat with a boa constrictor. On the first occasion the quadruped slipped over and over again through the smallest coils in which the huge reptile could enfold it. At first the boa seemed afraid of using its fangs, being probably aware of the danger of exposing its throat to the sharp and tenacious teeth of its opponent.

After a few rounds the two animals paused and gazed at each other as if mutually fascinated. Suddenly the boa's head, with distended jaws, came down like a thunderbolt upon the little mongosling. But the latter was quite ready for the movement of the foe and sprang with wonderful agility into the open mouth of the snake. The jaws of the boa snapped a quarter of a second too late. True to its instinct, the mongosling now fastened on the monster's throat, though *on the inside*, and, making diligent use of its teeth and claws, soon scraped a hole through the serpent's neck. It would not, however, emerge from its safe retreat until the last wriggles of the boa were over. Then it came forth and executed a sort of triumphal war-dance along the carcass of the slain snake.

It is hard for a big serpent to contend against a creature which it is impossible to squeeze and dangerous to swallow. But some big serpents are shifty and inventive. In the second fight that I was witness of, the boa was old and wary, and so very long that I would expose myself to suspicion if I expressed my opinion about its length. When it saw the tiny quadruped approaching, it rolled itself in the slimy swamp where it lay and then retreated to a rock close by. There, curling a yard or so of its tail as a support, it stood erect as a pillar and waited for the enemy. The mongosling, puzzled at these unusual and mysterious tactics, remained undecided for some time. At last, yielding to the instinct which prompted it to attack the *throat*, it began climbing the stiff and slippery snake by the aid

of its sharp claws, all the time gazing steadily at the serpent's head and evidently expecting a sudden snap. But the serpent continued motionless.

Soon the mongosling showed signs of weariness. It had not quite realized the difficulties of climbing a greased snake. But it was now many feet above the rock and only a few feet from the boa's throat. To ascend seemed less dangerous than to descend, and so, after a pause, it went bravely on. Its troubles increased however, for the serpent began to discharge saliva, which made its skin more slippery than before. The mongosling slipped once, but took a fresh hold and went on climbing more feebly. It slipped a second and a third time. Then the serpent shook itself violently, and the outwitted quadruped fell headforemost upon the rock and broke its neck. It was eaten with much relish by the cunning snake which then stretched itself for a good sleep, with the peaceful assurance that it was a benefactor to its kind and had taken in its worst enemy very nicely in more ways than one. "The little beast" mused the drowsy and contented serpent, "wasn't such a bitter enemy after all: he had his tender points. He went up me fiercely, but he went down sweetly."

* * * * *

"Those serpents must have been pythons, not boa constrictors," observed Bill at the close of the story.

My dear boy, said the Major, do you fancy I have lived a dozen years in Africa without knowing the difference between a python and a boa?

"But there are no boas in Africa!" cried Bill. "Their *habitat* is South America."

The boas that I saw did seem rather lonesome, said the Major. —Like emigrants just landed at Castle Garden.

"But how could they get across the ocean?" pursued Bill.

My dear Bill, I really am not responsible for the movements of snakes: I am neither a snake-charmer nor a Transatlantic ticket agent.

XLVI.

SIDE USE OF MEDICINE.

“YOUR health appears to have been wonderful, uncle,” said Bill the next evening: “were you never ill in all your travels?”

Once or twice, answered the Major, but never long—I made a point of taking medicine with me on all occasions.

When I was a *very* small boy I used to wonder why Indians called any worker of marvels a medicine-man. But I gradually stopped wondering. Even the name of medicine, I found, may have almost supernatural effects. For example, I seldom took to bed at my boarding-school but that I felt quite well, and even eager to get up, the moment I heard that the housekeeper was coming with a dose.

And I began in my boyhood to see that physic can do great things besides curing sickness. When our bull-terrier quarrelled with the Browns', the two dogs got their jaws locked, and no one in the crowd could separate them. One man pinched their tails and another cruelly suggested pouring hot water on them, and actually ran into a house to get some. But I had heard from my father that anger was a disease, and so I just gave each dog a teaspoonful of the castor-oil I was fetching home from the druggist's. I had to put it into the corners of their mouths, which they could not shut just then. It raised the blockade in a moment. The two dogs made

faces, opened their mouths with one accord, and became friends and sympathizers. I acted for the best on the occasion, and quite forgot Dr. Watts' advice to "let dogs delight to bark and bite."

When I grew up and went to Africa I always carried a few bottles and pill-boxes. I found it a capital plan, when lion-hunting, to load one barrel with ball and the other with pills. They were larger than No. 1 shot, and were old-fashioned pills with no sugar-coating and made of rhubarb and jalap. If the bullet missed a vital spot, the lion would rush at me, open-mouthed. When he got near enough I would give him a charge of pills, a few of which, scattered like shot, were sure to get into his mouth. Wild beasts always found the dose quite big enough, and retired. They would not come back soon either, preferring to let a few hours intervene between doses, according to the instructions on the box.

It was seldom, indeed, that my first bullet failed to kill, for I aimed calmly and steadily, owing to the just confidence I had in the contents of my second barrel. The pain of a wound, I knew, only enrages, but the pain of a jalap pill disheartens and disgusts a beast.

One time, when we were camping out, the native who was on watch fell asleep. A hungry panther, waiting till the fire had burned down, leaped into the circle of sleepers with a roar and seized my faithful servant by the collar. As the unhappy man was being dragged away, the agitated negroes rushed here and there, some looking for their guns, and some trying to kindle torches. But I took out my solution of quinine and dashed the liquid after the retreating beast. It fell chiefly on my servant's neck and shoulders; but the panther instantly loosened his grip and fled. He had no desire to eat a man with such a bitter taste! And indeed no one who has ever taken the mixture can help pitying the poor beast's disappointment.

On another occasion, I heard a piteous wailing in the bush, and, dropping my gun, I ran with my medicine box to the relief, as I thought, of a suffering fellow-creature. I found myself, however, face to face with the laughing hyena described by Captain Marryat, "which simulates the cries of mortal distress, and then devours the unwary traveler whose benevolence has drawn him to the spot—a sad instance of the ingratitude of human nature." Keeping my presence of mind, I took some capsules of laughing-gas out of the box and threw them into the treacherous animal's open mouth. This direct appeal to the risibility of his nature was too much for him, it tickled him to death. He grinned so immoderately that he could not get a bite at me, or even close his jaws, before I had drawn my pistol and forced him to laugh at the wrong side of his mouth.

But though I say it myself, I never knew any medicine save more human lives or kill more wild beasts and cannibals, all in a lump, than my own Equatorial Chill Cure. To prove the efficacy of this great discovery I put the first batch of negroes who wanted to be cured into a swamp of the worst possible character. This made them shake twice as much as before. Yet, at the first taste of the Equatorial Cure, they bounded from their constrained attitude and rushed home, as lively as grasshoppers.

"They didn't want a second taste, I'll bet!" said Bill.

No, my dear boy: they did *not*, said the Major emphatically. One was quite enough for any sick man, unless he had wholly lost the use of his senses, or was too ill to move.

"So I thought," whispered Bill.

I wanted to get photographs of some of the negroes, continued the Major, to print upon my labels as "Before" and "After"; but they shook too fast before, and ran too fast after physicking. Chance, however, made my recipe for the shakes (Price Four Shillings—no family should be without it) suddenly famous through-

out North-western Africa. On one of my expeditions in search of ostrich feathers our camp was surrounded by a tribe of ferocious cannibals. These abandoned characters were leaping forward with yells and assegais, with a grim determination to make mince-meat of us. I directed my negroes to fire, but the whole lot of them were shivering like aspen leaves, and could not hold their guns, much less take aim. The situation was truly critical. In desperation I uncorked a bottle of the Chill Cure and dashed its contents in the faces of my quivering followers. In a twinkling their shaking ceased, and they braced up. Every man felt like a hero and brought down his cannibal.

The tribe took to flight, and, together with their conquerors, spread abroad the rumor of my remedy for shakes. The price rose as the demand increased, and I soon got too many feathers in exchange.

“ Too many *ostrich* feathers? ” cried Bill.

Yes; too many ostrich feathers. There were such a lot coming in that I loaded a ship with them. You see they are a light freight, and so, after filling the hold of the vessel, we lashed stacks of them to the upper deck. This gave the wind such a strong grip upon the ship that the first violent gust sent her over on her beam ends, and she soon became water-logged. The crew took to the boats and were picked up by a British barque. The abandoned vessel floated for weeks, however, with her whole hull under water, so great and so buoyant was the pile of feathers on her deck.

“ How do you know how long she floated? Did the British barque stand by and watch her? ”

There goes that dreadful boy again, asking questions. Why, a month after she became a wreck, her masts were seen drifting on the rocks of Teneriffe; and most of the sea-birds on that island built their nests of ostrich feathers next season. She *may* have sunk and risen again—but resurrections at sea are out of my line of narrative.

XLVII.

AN OVER-CHARGE OF POWDER.

“THAT lion-skin of yours is the largest I ever saw,” observed Bill.

I daresay, said Major Mendax.

“And the thinnest,” added Bill.

Very likely.

“And the washiest,” pursued the lad.

And the washiest, likewise, said the Major. And in fact, as I heard you whispering to Bob, you hardly think it is a lion’s skin at all. I am glad to find you so observant, my boy, and sorry to say you are mistaken in this instance. The skin *has* some “fishy” features, but they will be accounted for when I have explained how I bagged the lion that used to wear it.

This ill-fated beast pursued me when I was riding on a camel in the desert. He was evidently hard up for prey, for he chased us in the day-time and almost all the day, though once in the forenoon we had left him a mile behind and quite out of sight. I discharged all my bullets at him without effect, owing to the unsteadiness of my camel, which was young, and to the visible trembling of the air as it rose from the overheated sand.

Night was approaching and my beast was showing signs of giving in, and the tension on my nerves was growing too great to bear much longer. Something had to be done, and at once. I threw my stock of dried meat behind me; but the lion smelt at it and left



SAVED BY SEIDLITZ POWDERS—BLOWING UP THE LION.

it lying, without pausing a second to decide. From this I assumed that he was more thirsty than hungry; that he wanted blood,—or water. This thought gave me my cue.

Though I had hardly a gallon of water left, I instantly resolved to offer it to the lion. Gratitude for the kindness would possibly have made him give up the chase; but I thought it a little safer to stop him by chemistry than by moral suasion.

I cut my last gourd into halves, scooped out and ate the contents, for I could not afford to waste what was both food and drink. Then I took a dozen Seidlitz Powders from my medicine-box which I always carried with me. Still galloping ahead, I put the blue-covered powders into one-half gourd, and the white-covered powders into the other. Then I dismounted, being about a quarter of a mile in advance of the lion. I hastily made two small holes in the sand and placed in them the hollowed half-gourds containing the powders and filled both of these vegetable vessels with water.

As I turned to mount, the camel suddenly dragged his halter through my hand and fled panic-stricken. And little wonder, either. The welcome sight of the water had quickened the lion's speed, and he was now approaching with terrific bounds. I followed the camel's example, I admit; but then I did not run away half so fast as that craven-hearted brute.

I looked round to see if the lion would drink, for my salvation depended upon that. To my delight he swallowed with two laps the water in the first vessel, which contained the blue-papered powders. In the vehemence of his thirst he did not stop to make a face, but bounded to the other vessel and drank its contents in one gulp.

Then came a minute's terror. The king of beasts uttered a roar that ended in a portentous hybrid sound, blended of a steam whistle and the hissing of a fireman's hose. His eyes protruded; his tail was stiffly perpendicular; his form dilated till it became colossal;

jets of steam issued from his eyes, his ears, and his nostrils. Then, with the sound of a thousand champagne corks popping at once, the unhappy animal burst.

A fizzing cataract that shot from his distended jaws propelled a loose tooth of his a distance of several hundred yards ; which tooth, I am glad to say, happened to hit my runaway camel and at once recalled him to a sense of duty, for he naturally fancied I had sent a bullet after him.

Had I had the elastic fancy and elastic conscience of a classical poet, I would have sung how my lion was changed into a shower of rain. Or I would have called the story by the pretty name of "Leo and the Fountain." But I am not an Ovid and did not think of it in time.

Anyhow I hope you know how that skin comes to be so spoiled and stretched. I brought it home as a curiosity, not as an ornament ; and in this point of view the things you noticed as defects are really its chief merits. Besides there is a fine moral in that skin—it is the shabby coat of a *dissipated* lion who drank too much.

XLVIII.

GREEDY JACK ; OR, THE EATER EATEN.

YOU never used to eat mushrooms, I thought, observed the Major, who had a weakness for these precocious vegetables.

"No, but I'm getting rather fond of them, thanks to your good example," said Bill, helping himself freely, to the diminishment of his uncle's second helping.

After dinner that day, when he was asked for a story, Major Mendax looked at Bill and began the following biographical sketch:—

Jack was not always a sneak. Take him after a Christmas or birthday dinner, and he seemed a jolly, good-natured boy with nothing mean about him. But in school hours he would often inform against his idle brother Sam for giving up an old lesson in geography or showing up an old copy to the forgetful old aunt who taught them. This he used to do because Sam's usual punishment for such sins was to have no sweet thing for dinner, and this gave Jack the chance of a larger share of pudding.

At school his dearest friend always was some boy who had, or who expected, a hamper of prog. In selecting his profession he chose to be a salesman in a confectioner's shop. But he was dismissed for eating the whole inside of a grand wedding cake. He scooped it out from below, leaving the white sugar ornaments and walls untouched. This excavated cake created a sensation at the wedding breakfast. The bride fainted when it was cut, and the indignant guests looked upon it as a hollow mockery, showing a sad want of good taste.

Jack next engaged himself as waiter in a famous restaurant. Just after his arrival a cat began to commit havoc among the delicacies of the season. It was only Jack who discovered the thievish animal in the cat. The proprietor was sometimes startled at the human tastes of the quadruped. One day in particular he could hardly believe the beast had eaten a quantity of hot turtle soup, notwithstanding that there was soup on the cat's whiskers and that one gentleman said he detected a faint flavor of cat in his soup. The next time there was turtle soup Jack was watched. He turned into the pantry on his way to the dining saloon. Having swallowed some quarts of soup, he took the slandered cat out of a closet into which

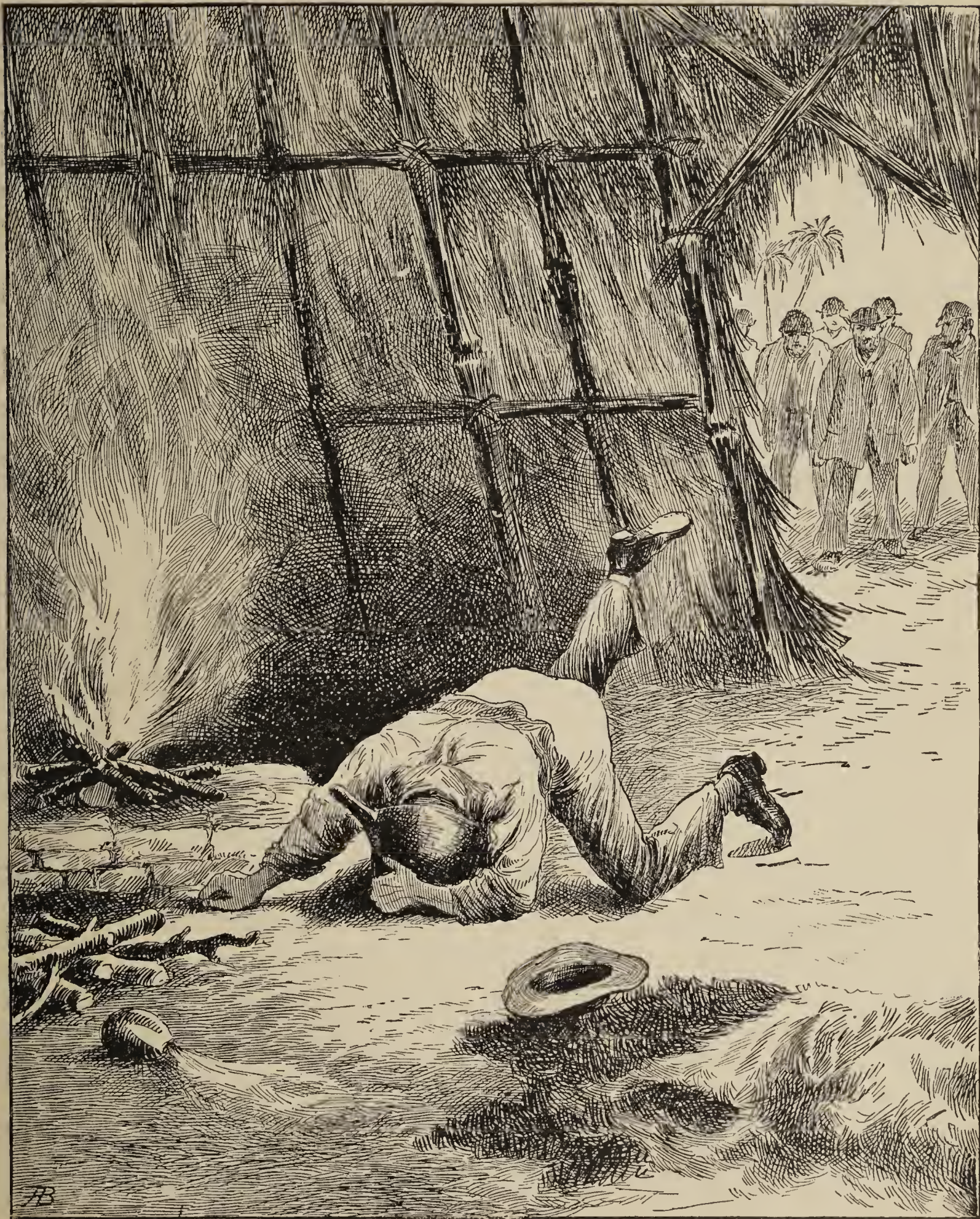
he had locked it, and stuck its head into the tureen, which he then carried up to the dining-room—for the last time.

After losing other places from similar reasons, greedy Jack decided to leave a country where he had been so hardly treated. Crossing the seas, he was shipwrecked and cast, with the crews of two boats, on a desert island. On the voyage he had shown a great liking for a fat boy named Harry, and had taken care to have him told off to the same boat as himself. When Harry was killed by the bursting of a rusty gun upon the island, Jack showed such signs of emotion and was so big and strong that no one ventured to propose eating the fat boy, though they were all on the verge of starvation. It was noticed, however, that Jack grew fatter in spite of his grief ; and a suspicious sailor who followed him one day, as he retired to mourn over Harry's remains, found him eating the last joint of his friend. Next day he was seen crying bitterly just about dinner time.

“ How I do miss Harry ! ” he sobbed desolately.

His just fate came at last. After devouring all the shell fish on the island, they put to sea again in despair, and in two days sighted a coast that showed signs of being inhabited. The boats touched the ground almost together, and their crews, now reduced to thirty souls in all, hurried to the only hut that was in view. Greedy Jack, who was the best fed, reached it first. Before he entered it two Malay women rushed out, leaving a potful of sago beside the fire. “ What would this be among thirty ? ” he said, and as the simplest means of keeping it all to himself, he stuck his head down into the pot.

His famished comrades only heard his last, contented gurgle as they tottered into the hut. He died as he had often longed to die—eating. Indeed he had managed to swallow nearly all the sago that was in the pot before he was smothered. And if a good deal over



THE GREEDY SAILOR—SMOTHERED IN GRUEL.

flowed, no distracting knowledge of the fact marred the happiness of his end—for he had never even glanced outside the pot.

Jack had left the starving mariners just one mouthful of sago apiece, and the insufficiency of this ration prompted them to bury him upon the spot—in twenty-nine separate receiving vaults.

“May he rest in p—pieces!” said the mate, after dinner, correcting himself in the nick of time.”

XLIX.

A BIG BLOW.

“UNCLE, your whiskers seem a little thinner on the right side than on the left,” said Bill. “How is that?”

Ah, sighed the Major, you little think of what a very sad experience you are reminding me!

On our eleventh day out from New York in the clipper ship “Revolution” bound for the west coast of Africa, we fell in with a terrific tornado. At its first onslaught the foremast went by the board with a crash, and was soon followed by the main and mizzen masts. All hands on deck and in the rigging were swept off and soared away, like seagulls, on the tremendous blast.

A suspicious looking cloud had made me ready for something out of the common; and I had seen the foaming track of the whirlwind on the sea, as it approached us. I had just time to secure one end of a long rope to the capstan and the other to a life-buoy, and to throw myself with the the latter into the sea. My object in doing so can be easily guessed. If the ship lived through the tempest I would

be hauled in; if she sank I could cut my life-buoy loose with my knife. Meanwhile I should be in no danger of being dashed against the bulwarks by seas sweeping the deck or of being maimed by broken spars or loosened boats. I was also guarded against the worse danger of being caught up by the wind, though I had not quite foreseen this.

The good ship, which had righted herself on the fall of her mizzen mast, was soon again forced upon her beam ends. It would be wrong to say that one blast was more furious than its fellows, for there were no perceptible intermissions in the sweep and roar of the tempest; but the tornado continued to grow in vehemence till it turned the ship fairly upside down. I was thinking of cutting the rope that linked me to the apparently doomed vessel, when, as the down-turned deck spanned the interval between two waves, the whirlwind, now at its height, had momentary access underneath, and, lifting the great ship in its violent arms, turned her clean over. The keel, which had been idle and out of its element during its brief exaltation, resumed its usual low but useful position, and stayed there.

“Why didn’t the wind turn her over again?” asked little Bob.

Because the hurricane now began to subside rapidly, and, besides, the vessel was a little heavier than before, having shipped some tons of water—which unfortunately drowned the watch below and all my fellow passengers.

While witnessing the fury of this dreadful storm I was naturally insensible to small personal pains. But I afterwards found to my disgust that the windward side of my face and head were entirely bald. Every hair and whisker had been blown away, some of them by the roots. Perhaps they are now hiding the ravages of time upon the head of some frivolous middle-aged merman. Had the blow lasted much longer I have reason to fear that I should have been

scalped. When we reached our destination I tried a barber's restorative which made my cheeks nearly uniform again—by destroying most of the hairs on the left side too.

“But how did you get back into the ship?” asked Bill.

I was hauled in, of course.

“But I thought all the ship's company were either drowned or blown away.”

Ah, to be sure, said Major Mendax; then I must have omitted to say that the captain and some sailors of a brig which was to windward were lifted off their own deck and blown on board the “Revolution” just after she righted the last time—which was certainly a most opportune coincidence, as they and I agreed. They were, nevertheless, a sad crew for the rest of the voyage, being obliged to wear the garments of their departed predecessors, as their own clothes had been blown into shreds during their aerial flight.

“He could fly through the air with the greatest of ease,
Could this charming young man on the flying trapeze,”

whistled Bill with an unusually innocent expression of face.

I have read, observed the Major, eying him distrustfully, of horses and wagons being carried over hills by cyclones; but I never set off my stories with such incidents.

L.

PAUDEE AND THE GREAT SERPENT.

I'll tell you a legend of the Kihis—said Major Mendax, who had been captured by the boys as he was retreating, and brought back in triumph to his easy chair—about a snake whose large appetite came near blotting the whole tribe out of existence. Ten grown-up or twenty infant Kihis were its regular allowance between the new and full moon. When the moon waned the monster relapsed into torpor. Not a complete torpor, however, as some bold youths found out, who attacked it in its supposed sleep and were swallowed by it in a sort of drowsy yawn.

The distress of the Kihis became pitiable. Only the leanest of them were secure, and numbers died of starvation in their efforts to reduce themselves to the necessary degree of scragginess. Dr. Tanner would have blushed unseen in Kihi-land at this period of its history.

At last a Mohammedan fakir, from Morocco, came that way; who, after standing on one leg for three consecutive moons, fell into a trance and pronounced that the great snake could be slain by fire alone.

It was Paudee, an ancestor of my informant, who resolved to attempt the deliverance of his country. This heroic chief had the most rounded limbs, the most exquisitely slit nose and the most pointed teeth in the tribe. To add to these attractions, he had secured the white neckcloth of a deceased missionary.

In vain the Kihi ladies coaxed their darling to abandon his danger-

ous purpose. His patriotism was unyielding; and on the appointed day he marched gallantly forth, at the head of his seventeen trained tomcats, each as black as Paudée himself. On the summit of the nearest hill he raised the missionary's necktie on the point of his assegai, and waved a farewell to his weeping loves.

All day the sable Knight and his sable retinue traveled on, unresting. Toward evening he reached a withered jungle, the lair of his terrible foe.

Gliding to the outskirts, the great serpent, in his exultation, executed some horrid contortions. Then he stretched back his neck and fairly laughed. What obliging creatures, he thought, these were *to come to him*, to be eaten.

Nor was his amusement less when, at a sign from their master, the seventeen tomcats boldly advanced to attack him. In seeming mockery he assumed the defensive. Rearing his imposing length from the earth, he stood rigid, like a branchless palm.

Still the devoted cats went forward in unbroken line. "They raised the pibroch of their race, the Song without a tune." One by one they scaled his unmoving body. One by one, as they reached the top, they leaped, cat-like, at his eyes. But at the nick of time the wary serpent always shut his eyes and opened his mouth, and there was one cat less to be seen.

It was from no timidity that Paudée kept aloof from this vain but dashing charge of his dark brigade. He had hurried to windward of the combatants and was rubbing two sticks together, chanting an incantation. As the seventeenth cat disappeared, Paudée smelt fire.

But the snake now for the first time turned his eyes upon the Kihi warrior, and saw the impending danger; for the monster knew his fiery doom. He dropt instantly from his columnar attitude. Falling in the direction of his enemy, he thereby diminished the distance between them by half. Then his swiftness partly failed him: he had

underrated the disadvantage of swallowing seventeen tomcats. He hardly moved quicker than a deerhound now; and some few seconds before he could seize the daring Paudee the sticks which the latter was rubbing were aflame. In a second more the long grass, which was withered by the monster's pestilential breath, was in a blaze; and the wind bore the flames from Paudee and toward the snake.

The doom of the latter was suddenly fulfilled. He died before he was thoroughly warmed through; and when the valorous Kihi made an incision in his smoking body he was charmed to see his seventeen brave cats emerge, unsinged and in good condition, from the inner darkness of which they formed a part.

I need hardly say that the triumphal procession of Paudee and his purring allies through the capital was a grand and thrilling spectacle; that his admirers spoiled him more than ever; or that cats at once became the fashionable pets among the fair ladies of Kihi-land.

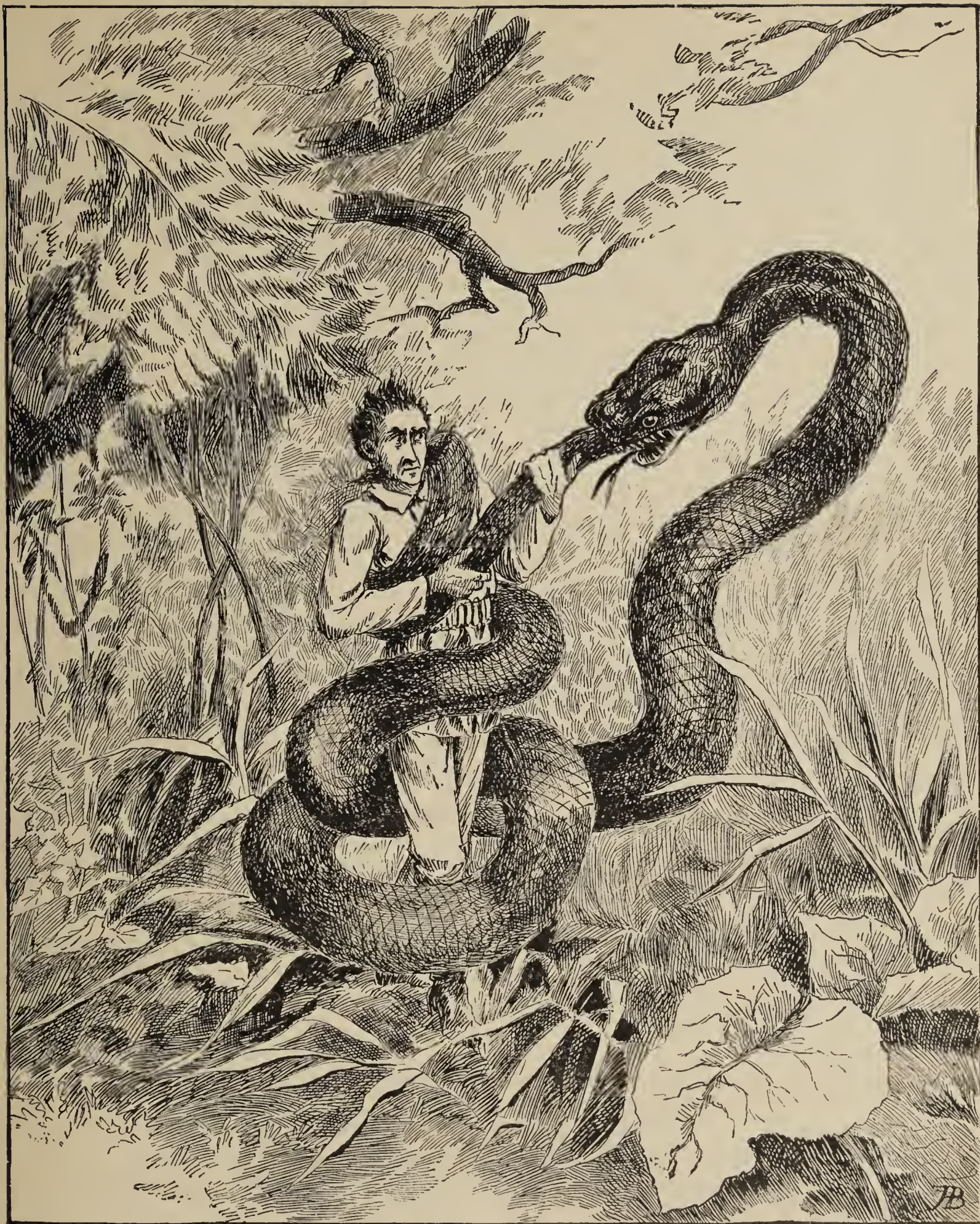
LI.

EXTREMES MEET.

THE Snake Swamp was unusually still—not a sound nor a sign of life till I was almost through it. Then I saw what in the gloom I had thought the fallen trunk of a tree open at the near end and disclose four fearful fangs and an abysmal throat!

Now I understood the silence of the place. I had read how the South American jungle becomes a solitude at the coming of a boa constrictor, when that great snake wakens from its state of torpor, and how every bird of the air and beast of the field flees from its presence.

For a moment I was incapable of action; and before that moment



EXTREMES MEET—A MARVELLOUS DELIVERANCE.

was over I was caught in a python's folds, and saw fierce eyes glaring down into mine. If that tremendous coil were tightened around me, I knew that I might at once check my luggage for the undiscovered bourne.

One becomes tolerably calm when fairly caught by a wild beast or serpent. Dr. Livingstone in the clutches of the lion felt no fear or pain, as well as I remember, but only a sort of numbness. And in this crisis of my own fate, as I saw the great python's tail in close proximity to his mouth, I thought calmly of the proverb, "Extremes meet."

I had always recognized the wisdom of this proverb, and I recognized it then. I grasped the snake's tail and pushed a yard or two down his yawning jaws. Neither extreme seemed to shrink from the contact: the mouth was not unused to swallowing snakes, and to the tail the process of being swallowed was novel and soothing. For serpents seldom bite their prey; they lubricate it and suck it down.

With such a long and cold-blooded creature, I calculated that it would probably take over half a minute before the sensations of his tail could be conveyed to his head, and render him aware that he was committing suicide. And it would take a longer time for him to disgorge several yards of his tail. So it was with some sense of security that I slipped out of his loosening embrace and wended my weary way homewards. Whether the python threw up his tail, or died of indigestion, or of disappointment, I did not pause to ascertain. He may even have swallowed himself completely and resembled a hogshead containing the whole carcass of a hog. But analogies sometimes are misleading.

In that short squeeze my hair turned quite white.

"Why, it's nearly black now," cried the boys.

Yes, said Major Mendax, in a day or two a worse fright made it dark again. Indeed, with my toils and sorrows and dangers, my hair has seldom retained the same color long.

LII.

THE EXTINCT (?) MOA.

“BY golly, what an egg!” exclaimed the little son of Slogo, chief of the Nogoës, whose guest I was at that time.

The wayward child had wandered one beautiful morning far from the camp of the Nogoës, contrary to the orders of his papa, and had lost his way. Little Rogo, for that was his name, had just come to one of the uninhabited oases of the Southern Sahara — a jungle of tree-heaths and yams and cassavas, between which here and there a stately oil or date palm lifted its crown high into the air.

“By golly, what an egg!” cried the delighted boy, as he turned over a spotted thing, as big as a water-melon, which he had found almost hidden in the sand. He examined it at first with curiosity, afterwards with appetite.

Little Rogo had never been told that it was cruel to rob birds’ nests and destroy their eggs. If he had been, it is very doubtful that he would have minded, for he was a spoiled child. Besides, he was growing very hungry just then; and so after a while he broke the huge egg with a stone and began to eat it, although the flavor was a little stronger than he liked.

Hot though the day was becoming, Rogo felt icy-cold when he glanced up, at the end of his breakfast, and saw something long reaching down towards him, from over the top of a thick shrub. It had down on it and a bill, and could hardly be a snake, though it did hiss for a moment. Visions of dragons and griffins and chimeras and other mixed monsters flashed before the eyes of the guilty boy. Oh how sorry he was that he had disobeyed his papa! and oh, how he longed to be at home with his mamma!

But the neck stretched down steadily towards him. For all that he knew, the creature might be all neck, for the bush over which it came was too thick to see through. Nearer and nearer approached the bill, not hissing now, but in fearful silence. It grasped him firmly by the right arm, and he felt himself rising, like a barrel lifted by a crane. On turning the top of the bush he saw that his captor was a bird something like a giant ostrich, only more erect. It was a relief to find that the creature was not all neck, as Rogo had begun to fear.

When the great bird had laid him gently at her feet, Rogo felt a little hope. His terror soon changed to mere wonder when the bird began to spread her wings, and cluck and show symptoms of pleasure, like those by which a hen expresses her selfish joy that a little chicken has come into a cruel world where doctors order chicken broth for sick people.

After a long time Rogo guessed the reason of these demonstrations. The moa, for this was the bird's name, though Rogo did not know it, is a very stupid bird, as much stupider than the ostrich as it is larger. This moa fancied the little boy had come out of her own egg, beside whose fragments she had found him. Perhaps she was surprised at seeing that he had no feathers or wings, and so short a neck. But then, like herself, he had two legs; and the wings of a moa are of little account, and the feathers, she may have thought, would come in due time.

You have heard how tenderly a thrush or robin will rear young cuckoos which have usurped the place of its own young ones; and how ducks will act as mothers to little orphaned chickens, and hens to orphaned ducklings. But their affection was nothing to the affection that the great, ungainly moa showed for little Rogo. She felt proud of him, knowing that no moa of her acquaintance could boast of such an infant. She lifted him time and again from the ground to her back, and from her back to the ground. She brought him two pretty little snakes to eat, and, finding that he shrunk from them, she fancied he must be ill, and went away to look for a nice tender toad, suitable for a baby moa that was "off its feed." This he was able to tell afterwards, because when she returned she had a toad in her mouth.

The way Rogo spent the time while she was away was exciting but not pleasant. As the swamp was some distance off, she had covered him with sand to prevent his straying, leaving only his head above ground. He had struggled against this burial, not knowing how far it would go or how long it would last. But his resistance was vain: the moa was gentle, but she was decided.

The first thing that particularly interested him was a scorpion; which he felt before he could see it, for it walked round his neck from behind, and then paused and looked him squarely in the face with its six eyes. Now to a young moa with a neck of the usual length and the digestion of an ostrich, a scorpion would be an easy prey and perhaps a delicate morsel; but poor Rogo nearly fainted. The only thing that saved him from a sting was that he was too closely packed into the sand to shiver or do anything to tease the ugly creature.

A naturalist would have seized the occasion to take an object lesson upon the structure and character of the scorpion. But little Rogo was not a naturalist. Rather than study another such 'ped-

ipalpous, pulmonary arachnid of the genus *Scorpio* ' from nature, as he did then, I verily believe that he would have preferred taking Webster's Dictionary and learning by heart the tremendous definition I have quoted.

Rogo was soon roused from the stupor which succeeded his fright by the swoop of a vulture which had noticed his disabled condition. But the bird had only time to leave the prints of its talons on his head when it was seized by a jackal which envied it its easy prey. The hideous bird extended its wings and tried to raise its assailant from the ground. Failing in this, it fastened its sharp claws upon the jackal's head, whereupon the beast let go its hold with a howl of pain. What the result of this war among thieves might have been, Rogo could only guess, for just then the moa reappeared. Seeing the danger of her adopted offspring, she stretched her long legs and, flapping her short wings to help her along, was soon upon the spot—not in time to punish the combatants, which separated and fled the moment they saw her.

The motherly moa renewed her strange caresses, and began to dig Rogo out of the sand. Before she had quite finished this job, the affectionate bird fell dead, pierced by a flight of arrows; and Slogo, attended by seven Nogo braves, clasped his missing child to his bosom and sobbed "My son! my son!"

Little Rogo's hair grew white in that one morning. It might have passed for real wool, only that it had also uncurled and stiffened out of sheer fright, so that it looked more like the prickles of a burr, or quills upon a fretful little porcupine.

"But, uncle," remarked Bill, "I read that the moa was extinct; and, anyhow, it used only to live in Australasia."

The very remark I made myself to Slogo! said the Major.

"And what did he say in reply?" asked Bill.

“Dar’s moa things in Africa, sah, than’s dreamed of in your philosophy,” he said in his nigger English.

“I wonder where he learned to speak nigger English!” exclaimed Bill incredulously.

Oh, I suppose he had been in Liberia, but I really never asked him. It is not thought polite in Nogoland to ask such personal questions.

“Perhaps the dodo isn’t extinct either!” said Bill ironically.

Perhaps not, returned the Major. Indeed I have seen spoiled little girls and young women, too, who are so constantly coaxing somebody for something, and so constantly crying “Do! do!” that I have sometimes fancied the dodo has only changed into a duck.

LIII.

SEE-SAW IN THE ELEPHANT PIT.

SOME miles from the company's trading-post was a four-sided cut in the ground. It was thirty feet long by twenty broad. In depth it was over twelve feet, and its sides were perpendicular. It had been an elephant pit when elephants were plentiful and the ivory trade brisk in the district. At the time I speak of it was no longer in use. A couple of planks, covered with withered sods and brambles, were all that remained of the false roof which had served to lure unsuspecting elephants to their downfall.

In this cut I was once forced to take refuge by an infuriated keitloa, or black rhinoceros, at which I had rashly fired. I was obliged to throw away my rifle in my race, and had barely time to leap blindly into the pit, whose bottom I luckily reached without any injury beyond a slight shock. Here, seating myself on a pile of broken planks, which in times past had yielded beneath the weight of elephants, I began to reflect. I had enough time : indeed I feared I might have a good deal too much time for reflection. A wounded rhinoceros is a stayer, and no mistake.

That I could climb out by piling up rubbish seemed likely ; but I didn't want to climb out while the keitloa was on duty there. That

he could jump in was certain ; and I fancied I could tease him into risking a leap. But I was far from wishing him to do so, unless I could go up and out *at the same instant* ; and this seemed simply impossible.

At last I hit upon a scheme—a dangerous one, to be sure, but not so dangerous as waiting to be starved to death. I constructed a see-saw. A strong, unbroken plank made my moving-beam ; for a stationary, or supporting-board, I put several broken planks on top of one another and bound them, as best I could, with bits of old rope. This rope had formerly served to bind the false roof, and now lay among its ruins at the bottom of the pit.

One end of the moving-beam was immediately under that side of the pit where the rhinoceros had taken his stand. Across the beam, from this end to where its centre rested on the fixed support, I tied branches and covered them with withered grass—knowing that a rhinoceros is never remarkable for intelligence and is especially easy to deceive when angry.

I then took my seat on the other end of the see-saw, thereby, of course, tipping up the extremity nearest the huge brute, at which I began popping with my revolver. I also, in imitation of the natives, called him various abusive names and reflected insultingly upon his ancestry. At last he screamed, or perhaps I should say grunted, with rage (whether at the bullets or the abuse, I cannot say) and withdrew a few steps for a charge. Notwithstanding a slight sinking sensation, I fired my last cartridge and shouted out a name calculated to drive a sensitive keitloa wild. Then I shut my eyes and nervously awaited his descent.

If he touched the sea-saw with any part of his ponderous body, I should be shot up—where, I could not exactly tell ; if he missed the see-saw, I should stay down, and it would beyond all doubt be all up with me.

Bang! came his forefoot on the raised end of the beam, cutting short my reflections. Whiz! up went the lower end, and I with it, like a rocket. I fortunately alighted outside the pit, having been considerably above its brink at the height of my flight.

The rhinoceros was now a captive himself. Indeed, he possibly continues one to this day, for an agent of Barnum's shortly afterwards visited our station in search of new attractions for his menagerie, and I sold my prisoner in the pit for a few hundred dollars, generously refusing three times the amount of *cash upon delivery*.

LIV.

THE MAJOR AS A POET.

"IT was lucky for you that none of the animals which treed you was a grizzly bear, uncle," said little Bob.

Why so, Bob?

"Because it would have climbed after you."

Grizzly bears can't climb, said the Major. I was treed by one when I was a boy. I did not feel very cheerful at first, I can tell you, for I knew the obstinacy and perseverance of the beast. But when I saw my big brothers coming to look for me with a number of young men, I regained my spirits. In my joy I placed my right thumb upon my nose and burst into poetry. Like the youthful Pope, "I lisped in numbers, for the *numbers* came." This was my triumphal hymn:

ODE TO A TANTALIZED GRIZZLY.

BY A BOY IN A TREE.

If you were here,
Or I were there,
You pretty dear,
I'd be nowhere !

You long, like sin,
To take a hug
And put me in
Your ugly mug.

But as you are
A grizzly bruin,
Not a black b'ar
Or a baboon,

You never can
Get on this branch ;
Therefore, old man,
Vamoose the ranch.

Trust me and trot,
Ursus ferox,
If you are not
Fond of hard knocks.

O grizzly dear,
Beloved b'ar !
Thou art so near,
And yet so far.

You cannot fly
Or climb a tree ;
And so bye-bye—
You won't catch me.

At this point my poem was cut short by a volley from my brothers. The bear seemed to hesitate between fight and flight, and I thought a good, sound lecture upon his own shortcomings might decide him to retreat. This sort of discourse is nearly as improving and pleasing to bears as to human beings.

"Go home," I said, "you rampageous, plantigrade quadruped! A bear that, in this nineteenth century, cannot learn to climb a tree or dance to the barrel-organ, or carry a monkey, or eat anything but nasty raw meat, is a disgrace to its family, its sub-order and its class. You great, awkward, indocile vertebrate, you! You blot upon the animal kingdom! You cruel, irreclaimable, carnivorous thing! You very disagreeable mammal, not to be affected by the music of my verse! Be wise and go home, *ursus horribilis*, before it is too late: there are larger and heavier words remaining where these have come from."

There was not much fight left in him after this. When I brandished my "Pocket Zoology," as if to hurl ten thousand awful names at once, he staggered away from the terrific missile.

LV.

HID IN HIS HIDE.

“**I** READ of a man who nearly jumped out of his skin with fright,” said Bob, who had never been at a school. “Can this be true, Uncle?”

“You little donkey!” interposed Bill, with the rude condescension of sixteen to ten, “it is only a figurative expression. No man ever cast his skin, like a snake. Even deer, which change their color and hair, don’t actually change their skin, or at most only do so gradually and—”

Except, interrupted the Major, as if struck by a sudden thought—except sometimes in the tropics. Animals and plants, you know, mature and change quickly under a tropical sun. Is it strange that African heat, aided by the glow of extremely violent exercise—

(“Or of a fervid imagination,” whispered Bill.)

Should enable a deer to throw its whole coat off in a minute?

I had a kitchen garden on my place in Africa, and one day my gardener reported that some animal had been making havoc among the vegetables. The brute having renewed its visit next night, I followed its spoor in the morning. I was mounted and accompanied by my young deerhound. We soon came in view of a large antelope with twisted horns, apparently a Koodoo. He was an ungainly specimen, whose coat seemed too loose, like the skin of an elephant reared in a circus. But he ran like a good one and increased his distance till he reached the Waw-waw river. He had dwindled to a mere speck,

when he bounded into a clump of prickly bushes that grew by a bend in the stream.

When I came to the spot I could see his form indistinctly in the middle of the clump, and my dog made wild efforts to penetrate the barrier of thorns over which the antelope had sprung. I set about clearing a passage for the hound with my hunting-knife on the side of the clump next the water, where the foliage was less dense. The dog rushed in and gave a disappointed whine. He had found the form of an antelope without the venison.

The dodgy ruminant had scraped a line, nearly following his backbone, through the sound portions of his old hide. With a supreme effort he had then leaped out of his discarded coat, which a profuse perspiration rendered easier to shuffle off. Afterwards he had doubtless entered the river, screened by the cluster of bushes.

The chase was now almost hopeless. We could find neither spoor nor scent on either bank; and if we had, the antelope had too long a start now. Yet I followed the stream for a considerable distance, so eager was I to repay the beast for the sell he had played upon my dog and me. I scanned everything sticking out of the water with suspicion, hoping it might be the horns or nose of the enemy. But I was doomed to go home baffled that day.

Next night the depredations in the kitchen-garden were repeated. In the morning I rode after the marauder on a faster horse and without giving him so long a start as he had the day before. He fled in the same direction, leaped into the same clump, and disappeared apparently in the same way. But I resolved to lose no time on this occasion, and called off the hound which, in spite of its yesterday's experience bayed furiously at the antelope's skin and seemed strangely loath to leave it. I felt sure the cunning ruminant was in the water and could not be far beyond the head of the river. Knowing he was too sensible a beast to swim against the

current, I galloped down stream, confident of getting a shot in a few minutes. But I could not find a sign of him. Seemingly he had sunk into the water or into the ground, for he could not possibly have escaped by the open plain, which lay beyond the river, without my seeing him distinctly.

Returning home thoroughly tired and bewildered, I saw an animal tripping lightly and freshly away from my kitchen-garden. My friend the antelope had been making a hearty supper off my asparagus.

A few days later I thought I would remove the cast-off skin of the antelope. While it remained in the clump of bushes, its scent would detain my dog uselessly, if the antelope should make for the same cover again. My horses having been overworked of late, I walked. On my way I once fancied I saw a speck moving away from me in the dim distance.

Arrived at the thorny bushes, I began cutting away some more twigs to enlarge the opening made before. My work was interrupted by a movement of the dead skin, out of which the live antelope bounded high in the air and rushed past me, to plunge into the river!

In my first amazement you might have knocked me down with a feather. But before he had swum out of range I regained my self-possession, and sent a pill after him that cured him of his tricks.

The crafty brute, which had baffled me the first day by jumping out of his skin, had baffled me the second day by jumping into it again, thinking very knowingly that, having once been taken in by an empty hide, I was not likely to search it again.

“And where might that Waw-waw river be, Uncle?” queried Bill.

In Africa, said the Major.

He held that too precise information, by removing their difficulties, encourages laziness in the young.



OUT OF HIS HIDE—A STARTLING DEVELOPMENT.

LVI.

THE CATAPULT SNAKE.

“SO you believe there were no such things as flying serpents in ancient times, Uncle?”

If the ancients were right, my boy, then flying must be numbered among the lost arts of snakes. There is a kind, though, that can as good as fly, and this may have deceived some respectable old pagans.

It was owing to my unlucky balloon that I got the chance of seeing this shy and retiring reptile. I was sailing over a grove, watching the antics of a parrot perched on the very top of a tall palm, when suddenly something like a bent arrow, or rocket, shot out of a lower tree, struck the bird, and sank down with it through the leaves of the palm.

Unlike an arrow in one respect, the strange missile coiled and curved in its passage through the air. Perhaps I should have likened it to a sling, dragged from the hand of an unskilful slinger by the force of the slung stone, and following the latter in its flight.

Anxious to read the riddle, I descended and anchored my balloon. Here, perhaps, I thought, was some new weapon, marvellous as the Australian boomerang, to grace my collection of savage arms.

However, I saw no lurking savage, and no strange new missile, from the top of the tree on which I alighted; but I saw a family party of snakes on the ground beneath. Two young ones were evi-

dently being drilled by their parents in the mode of warfare peculiar to their race.

Placing the dead parrot aside, as the prize of valor or skill, the parent snakes formed a ring with their bodies. On entering this arena, each young one—by a strange contortion—formed a knot upon its gristly tail, and attacked the other with this artificial weapon. They would advance to the attack spinning like wheels, and, once within striking distance, down would come their knots with a surprisingly quick jerk. They could convert a circle into a straight line and a straight line into a circle, more rapidly than any professor of geometry I ever met; yet, though they hit each other several times, they seemed to do little damage, for these youngsters, of course, could not be expected to tie such hard and tight knots as their elders. A combat between two hardened old catapults—as I named these reptiles—would be a very serious matter, I should judge.

This spirited tournament came to a sudden close. As I was straining forward to get a better view, a branch cracked beneath my foot, and the sound caught the heedful ear of the mother snake. In a second the wary reptile called “time,” and issued a warning hiss; at which her well-trained offspring hastily retreated, jumping down her throat for protection.

The catapult is a great inventor—an Edison among snakes; yet it cannot justly claim a patent for this mode of sheltering its young in time of danger. Vipers and rattlesnakes are said to have practiced the same trick for a great many years.

The color of the catapult is green; but it is not half as green as it looks. This I found out to my cost; for, although the mother had vanished beneath the long grass, the male began to make mysterious preparations for war.

He began operations by knotting his tail with an audible crack. He twisted its knotted end firmly around a projecting root of the

tree on which I was perched. Then he reared his head toward a branch which lay directly between his tail and me. This branch, though seemingly too high, he reached with ease by simply shooting out an extra joint—for the catapult is the only serpent that is built upon the telescopic plan. Having grasped the branch in his jaws, he began shortening himself with wonderful contractile power, until his body, stretched between the root and the branch, looked like the string of a bent bow, or of a catapult at full cock.

I now thought it high time to set about unmooring my balloon, as I did not exactly know what to expect next. But, before I had untied the first rope, the snake unwound his tail from the root of the tree, let go his hold on the branch, shot himself into the air, and struck me sharply, with his knot, on the left shoulder.

The shock of the contact with my shoulder changed the snake's course in the air. He fell to the ground some little distance away. He was quite unhurt, and hastened to prepare for a second assault. However, I happened to be in as great a hurry as he was, and just when he had taken position for another flight, I let go my anchor-rope, and up went the balloon.

I had discovered what missile it was that killed the parrot, but I paid dearly for the knowledge. My shoulder ached for weeks afterward.

LVII.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

“I’M sorry he keeps up that nasty habit,” said grandmamma, who had found the Major’s snuff-box on her work-table.

“Grandmamma’s sorry you keep up the nasty habit of taking snuff, uncle,” repeated little Bob, delivering the snuff-box to its owner.

Perhaps, observed the Major, she would not think it quite so nasty if it had saved her life as it did mine.

“Saved your life!” cried Bob.

That’s just what it did. What’s the use of repeating one’s words in such a tone as that, just as if you doubted them?

“I only wanted to hear the story, uncle.”

In that case, said the Major, I suppose you must have it:—

Three of us, two negroes and myself, had been collecting young animals. We had caught an infant rhinoceros and a very promising little crocodile, and had tied the captives in our wagon. We were taking a hasty meal before starting for home, when we perceived the parent animals advancing from different quarters to the rescue of their offspring.

In an instant we had aimed our guns—two at the galloping rhinoceros, one at the waddling crocodile. One negro’s bullet hit the

latter on the back, but he was a hard-shelled crocodile and wasn't a bit hurt. My gun and the other negro's missed fire. In our struggle with the baby crocodile they had got under water, and we had forgotten to unload and clean them.

Our wagon stood beneath a tamarind tree, which we hastened to climb. Fortunately for them, the oxen had not yet been yoked. Both negroes got up in good time, but I was indebted to the rhinoceros for a hoist. It came up before I could pull myself up to the second branch, and just managed to touch my foot with its horn, which gave me a useful and unexpected lift. The tamarind shook with the violence of the monster's charge.

Soon the crocodile came up, too, and the blockade of the tree was complete. At first we hoped the animals might manage to free their young ones and retreat. But the cords had been too well tied, and the awkward beasts did not know what to do with them. So they waited on and on for their revenge. They were quite friendly to each other, and seemed to have formed a sort of alliance.

It was plain they would outlast us, unless something turned up. They had two advantages over us, in not being obliged to cling to branches, and in having water at hand, to which they could go, one at a time, to refresh themselves. Before climbing we had been forced to drop our firearms, wet and dry.

I got out my snuff-box and took a pinch to aid my deliberations. I wondered whether a crocodile would like snuff, or whether it would think it a "nasty habit." At all events I thought it could do no harm to try. One of the negroes always carried whipcord to mend the whips and the harness of the wagon. I borrowed this and let down some snuff in a piece of paper within a few inches of the crocodile's snout. Then I shook the string and scattered the snuff.

A moment afterwards the crocodile made a sound so human that I was going to call it a remark.

“Akachu!” observed the reptile.

“Akachu! Akachu! Akachu!” it repeated at intervals, opening its jaws wide every time.

The rhinoceros seemed surprised at this behavior on the part of his ally. He evidently did not like it, and seemed uncertain whether to take it as a personal insult or as a symptom of insanity. This furnished me with an idea. I would fan the flame of enmity between the friendly monsters and turn their brutal strength against each other.

I could not get at the rhinoceros myself, but one of the negroes was just above it; so I passed the box and string, and directed him to give the beast a few pinches of snuff as I had done to the crocodile.

The latter animal had just done sneezing himself when, to his mortification and disgust, he heard the rhinoceros apparently beginning to mimic him.

“Akachu!” said the rhinoceros; “Akachu! Akachu!” opening his mouth in the very way the crocodile had done.

This was too much for the king of reptiles to stand. To be mocked thus, and in the presence of his child! The blood of the Leviathans was up.

At this moment we scattered the rest of the snuff in the faces of both animals impartially.

“Akachu!” they roared, grimacing at each other hideously and threateningly for a few moments. Then they rushed to battle, uttering the same war-cry—“Akachu!”

The rhinoceros had the best in the first round. He got his horn under the saurian's lower jaw and tossed it over on its back. The reptile now seemed helpless; but with a sweep of its resistless tail it knocked its enemy's fore legs from beneath him and prevented his following up his advantage promptly. The quadruped, however

after a while got round the overturned crocodile, and was about to stamp upon the soft side of its body when a convulsive sneeze came to the reptile's aid and lent an electric energy to its muscles. With a triumphant "Akachu!" it turned right side up and grasped a leg of the rhinoceros in its huge jaws. This was turning the scales with a vengeance on the rhinoceros, who now tried to crush the saurian's shell by means of his superior weight.

Such was the blindness of their fury that I now felt it was quite safe to descend and yoke the oxen. We drove off with the young ones before the monsters' eyes. For the moment their parental affection had been fairly *snuffed out*.

Before we were out of hearing something cracked.

"Go it, you cripples!" exclaimed one of the negroes, brutally.

"What did you do with the young animals, uncle?" inquired Bill.

The snuff was indirectly fatal to them also, answered the Major. No sooner were they unloosed than they spiritedly took up the quarrel of their parents, and fought it out to the end.

Do you remember the motto of imperial Rome, my boy?

"'Divide and prevail,' I suppose you mean."

Precisely so, said the Major; and I have found it a useful thing to recollect on more occasions than one.

LVIII.

MATERNAL LOVE.

IT is indeed a great mercy for a creature foredoomed to be eaten that it should fancy itself upon a pleasure trip while it is actually being swallowed. Where ignorance is bliss compulsory instruction is cruel.

With sentiments such as these, a great crocodile shut his eyes and benevolently opened his jaws to their very widest. His jaws were the only parts of his body then visible from the shore, the rest of his carcass being skillfully concealed by slimy water and a bed of rushes. The tip of his under jaw almost touched the river-bank.

He thought the thought and assumed the attitude on seeing some newly weaned spaniel puppies approaching with their mother,—probably to drink. Dog was his favorite food. And he knew that, if he only kept still enough, the inexperienced pups would take his great open mouth for a cavern. He also had hopes that the ardor of youthful curiosity would make them enter and explore.

Nor was he disappointed in this expectation. The pups scampered ahead of their mamma who was attending to a casual bone. They saw a chasm five feet long in the rushes and set it down as the mouth of a cave. The teeth they thought were unusually regular rows of stalactites and stalagmites on the roof and floor—not that they knew the things by these precise names. Such a strange entrance raised hopes of further curiosities inside.

In his large hospitality the crocodile patiently let them enter one

after another. The old dog arrived just as her last pup was passing the ivory gate that led to the dreamless land within.

"Virgil's ivory gate led to the land of dreams," observed Bill sophomorically.

But crocodiles' ivory gates don't, said the Major, going on with his narrative.

The experienced spaniel took in the situation at a glance. With the grand devotion of a mother she instantly bounded after her young ones to apparent destruction. So swift and unhesitating was her leap that the crocodile failed to do what he had fully intended, that is to "shut down upon her," as he would have termed it had he been an American alligator. The treacherous closing of his eyes delayed the closing of his mouth.

As she flew past his long teeth the spaniel uttered a shrill howl as if to warn her children to go no further down. Then she mustered her family in the rear of the crocodile's back teeth; where clinging one to another, they defeated every effort of the reptile to bite or swallow them.

So far the ambushade of the crocodile had only brought him disappointment and an unpleasant tickling in the throat. At length he thought he would open his jaws wide again to tempt the dogs out: he reckoned on catching at least some of them as they passed by his teeth. But the wary mother guessed his wicked intention and positively forbade her puppies to budge.

But, long after the crocodile had abandoned the dodge as a failure and closed his mouth, he opened it again to express the weariness of his spirit in a sigh. Seizing this unguarded moment, the watchful spaniel bounded out through her enemy's jaws, carrying her favorite pup in her mouth.

"And what became of the other puppies?" asked Bob.

They got out too, and in a way that very much strengthens my

belief that animals have some means of conveying their ideas to each other. Every one of the young dogs, except the one the mother had in her mouth, was hanging by its teeth to her tail. When, in her joy at landing all her offspring safely on the bank, the old dog made a wild effort to wag her tail, the effort proved a lamentable failure. For the pups kept their grip some seconds after getting ashore, and, happening to shake themselves with one accord in order to dry themselves, presented a spectacle that would have pleased and perplexed Dundreary. It was indeed the only properly authenticated instance of a dog being wagged by its tail.

The crocodile sighed a second and a still longer sigh over the disastrous result of his former one. A tantalizing flavor of escaped pup was in his throat, and his feelings were too intense for correct utterance.

"If any dog plays that trick on me again," he gasped, "I'll be dog-goned!" Which remark of the crocodile not only expressed what he felt, but also shows the probable origin of an odd American expletive that has hitherto puzzled etymologists.

And the mortified reptile further vowed that he would eat more correctly in future and never take a second mouthful before he had quite eaten what was in his mouth.



MATERNAL LOVE.

LIX.

THE "HOWIS DATFORHI."

THE second time I was at Goalonga, a lovely oasis not marked on any map (I fancy no white man's foot had ever rested there before),—

"Weren't you a white man the first time you were there?" asked Bill.

"Perhaps so, but I didn't happen to get out of my balloon on that occasion. And, to resume, the second time I was at Goalonga, I saw the Howis Datforhi, as the natives call it, or as I called it myself, the River Kangaroo, (*Macropus Fluviensis*). The forte of the river kangaroo, as of his tribe generally is leaping. He can beat the great kangaroo of Australia at long jumps, while at high jumps he can lick any living thing except the cow that jumped over the moon, and Macbeth, who was prepared to "jump the life to come." But the animal soon tires, and, when overtaken by a beast of prey away from a stream, he speedily falls a victim nowadays.

But the lions and panthers are more knowing than they used to be. When the river kangaroo is tired out and overtaken, he tries to baffle his pursuer by a series of springs, about a hundred feet high. These give him less labor than long jumps, for the balls of his feet are more elastic and rebound better than the liveliest India-rubber ball. He is obliged to exert his muscles afresh only once in about twenty ascents: the other nineteen are nothing but rebounds. The

twentieth jump is, of course, the highest, and it is then he utters a curious cry, very much resembling his native name, "Howis Datforhi."

The blacks say that carnivorous animals do not know how to deal with the river kangaroo, when thus at bay. It was vain to place themselves beneath his descending body, for, whatever part of their backs or heads he touched first with his elastic feet, off he bounded quite far enough to enable him to launch himself upward again, and commence a new set of springs. In fact, the beasts of prey who chased this strange animal only exposed themselves to kicks for nothing.

Now the lions, at least, know how to catch the river kangaroo when they surprise him far from water. I myself saw the finish of an exciting chase, when the hunted animal, wearied of forward jumping, waited for the lion to come up and then began his old tactics. After watching his wonderful bounds for some time with apparent interest, the lion suddenly sprang to one side, guessing correctly the spot where his victim would reach the ground. There he turned upon his back, and with his four paws in the air, awaited the doomed kangaroo, which he caught as neatly as if he were the catcher of a champion Nine. There was no rebounding from that grip!

"But how is the river kangaroo better off beside water?" you may ask.

Why, he jumps across the river, to be sure, and has lots of time to rest while his enemy is swimming it. Then he jumps back again. He can keep this game up all day, and seems rather to enjoy it. In fact, young and adventurous Howis Datforhis go a little away from the banks to try and tempt some ferocious animal to chase them, just for the fun of disappointing it.

But, perhaps you may remark that you never heard of kangaroos out of Australia. And it *does* puzzle me how the beast can have got

into Africa. The blacks have a ridiculous fable that, ages ago, two gigantic Howis Datforhis leaped across the sea from some foreign land. But, of course, such bounds as these are beyond the bounds of human faith. I can only vouch for what I saw myself.

LX.

A GREEN MAN AND A "GREEN BEAST."

ONE season I got tired of African vegetables, and concluded to grow some corn and asparagus in a field about half a mile from my house. I had inclosed the land with a strong fence, and was on my way to paint the fence green, with a view to preserving the wood and keeping off certain insects. I had nothing in my hand but the paint-pot, never dreaming that I should meet any dangerous brute so close to the company's station.

Just as I got inside the inclosure I heard the trumpeting of an elephant, and saw a huge animal charging at me, trunk in air. It is very uncommon for an elephant to attack a man unprovoked; but this one was a "rogue," which, being driven out from the herd, becomes the most vicious and dangerous of its kind.

This I found out afterwards; for at the time I bent all my thoughts and all my energies upon reaching the nearest large tree knowing that I should not be safe in a small one. My tree of refuge was a baobab, small of its kind, not being over fifteen feet in circuit. It was easy to climb, and so hardly knowing what I was doing, I took my paint-pot up with me.

On came the elephant, right through the fence, which snapped in pieces before him, only seeming to increase his rage.

I know I was in for a long siege useless some one should come that way, for one of my negro laborers was laid up, and the other was out fishing, and might be out all night. Nor was there any hope of escaping when the brute went to water, for there was a brook in sight of the tree.

After sunset the elephant did withdrew to take a drink, but came straight back, and lay down beneath the tree. About that time I thought my case hopeless, for I was already suffering from thirst. I might last till the morning, but when the heat returned I must faint and fall. I wondered whether it would be pleasanter to be trampled by an elephant or to poison myself with green paint. It was a lucky thing that I thought of that paint, for it put an idea into my head. Acting upon this idea I began to tease the brute and disturb his repose, by throwing broken twigs and shouting at him. I wanted to make him particularly mad with *me*, so that he would let anybody else pass him unmolested.

Then I took off all my other clothes, and having made them fast where I had been sitting, I painted myself green from head to foot! Of course he could not see what I was doing in the dark.

At the first signs of dawn I descended to a lower bough, taking my snuff-box with me. This I opened and threw at his head, thinking it advisable to impair his sense of smell, if possible. He started to his feet and looked about him. It was lighter now, for it lightens quickly in Africa; but he could not see me, as I was the same color as the leaves of the baobab. So he merely fixed his gaze on my clothes and sneezed.

Just then I slipped down to a still lower branch, and from that to

the ground, and walked away—coolly, in one sense of the word—for I was shivering with fright.

He looked at me for one moment only: it was not a green man nor a green monkey that he was after. So I left him sneezing and trumpeting furiously—at my garments.

The elephant was wrong in believing the common adage that “the tailor makes the man.”

LXI.

THE BYE-BYE.

“**D**O African monkeys swing by their tails like the prehensile-tailed apes of South America?” asked Bill. “My Natural History says no.”

I suppose your Natural History is right, answered the Major. The monkeys of America ought to beat those of the Old World in the item of tall tails. But the African Bye-bye, or rope-tailed ape, is an exception.

“I never read of it,” observed Bill.

Nor did I, said the Major. Indeed, I never believed in its existence until one day, far in the interior, what seemed to be a lame monkey crossed our path a good way in advance. A panther was pursuing it. The monkey was trailing a long chain or rope behind it, and hobbled on with seeming difficulty, till it reached a tall, smooth trunked palm, with not a branch lower than twenty feet from the ground. Halting there, it faced its pursuer with a look of calm despair, like one who has abandoned earthly hope.

This seemed only to please the cruel panther. He quickened his pace, and was soon within a few rods of his intended prey, when

the rope before alluded to began to rise rapidly from the ground ! “Excelsior !” appeared to be the motto of the erectile rope, which I now perceived was really the monkey’s tail. Up and up it went, like Jack’s bean-stalk ; higher and higher it mounted up the trunk. In a few seconds its end was twenty feet in the air, and was coiling round the first branch of the palm !

Then the ape began ascending its own tail, hand over hand, with great agility, until it reached the branch. Safely seated there, it gazed forgivingly at its baffled persecutor, only muttering now and then the strange ejaculation to which it owes its name : “Bye-bye ! bye-bye ! bye-bye !”

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head m tts

FL 12 11-51

instead of being about to commence
I started out in good spirits, feeling fre
and strong. My wife and various friends
to whom I recommended the medicine
have been benefited greatly, and in

Historical Society,

Halifax N. S.

April 14, 1891

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I am surprised O' Drinell
has not written you, as he promised,
making some suggestion as to
terms. He said something half-
audible about giving any photos
already taken for nothing — name, I
assume, the printing of his name.
But I don't like making another
man's offer for him, without
distinct authorization. Perhaps he
is ill — as is too often the case with
him, I believe.

In reply to your kind
inquiry my publishers were

FL 12-11-51

X
of "Bewildered Querits," Putnam's
Sons N.Y. ; of "Majors Big-Talk
Stories," Frederick Warne & Co,
London ; of "Hairbreadth
Escapes of Major Mendon,"
Hubbard Bros, Philadelphia.

The last two books were
bought out and published at the
sole expense of publishers,
the author having no interest
in the sales, save that I
got an acceptable little sum
for the republication of ^{about half the} Mendon
stories in London. This was
from "The Magazine of Short

"Stories" which was publishing
the series under a changed
title ("Reminiscences Adventures of
our Uncle, the Major") and with
no name — fancying it
was only pirating from
a piratical Yankee, and not
knowing some of the tales
had appeared and been copy-
righted in London.

No, "The Union Jack," is
dead, some years since. It was
a boys weekly and monthly
magazine (like the Boy's Own,
which it aimed at beating) published
by Sampson Low & Co, and
edited by the celebrated juvenile

author ~~writer~~ G. A. Henty. It attained
what would be an immense
circulation in Canada, but
not a paying one for a penny
weekly paper employing the
best artists and writers (Julius Bone,
Cuthbert Bede, &c &c), and having,
I think, no advertisements.

If you fear the photo will
come out so indistinctly as to mar
your paper, let me know at once and
I will have a cabinet size taken;
but personally, since my washing
days have gone, I am not particular
about my appearance.

Perhaps I ~~might~~ have added
"The Literary World" (Boro.) to the ^{periodicals} papers to
which I had contributed a number of articles, as
it is a respectable journal. But I am not
sure that the number needed half-a-
dozen.

Yours faithfully
F. Volante Crofton

P. S.

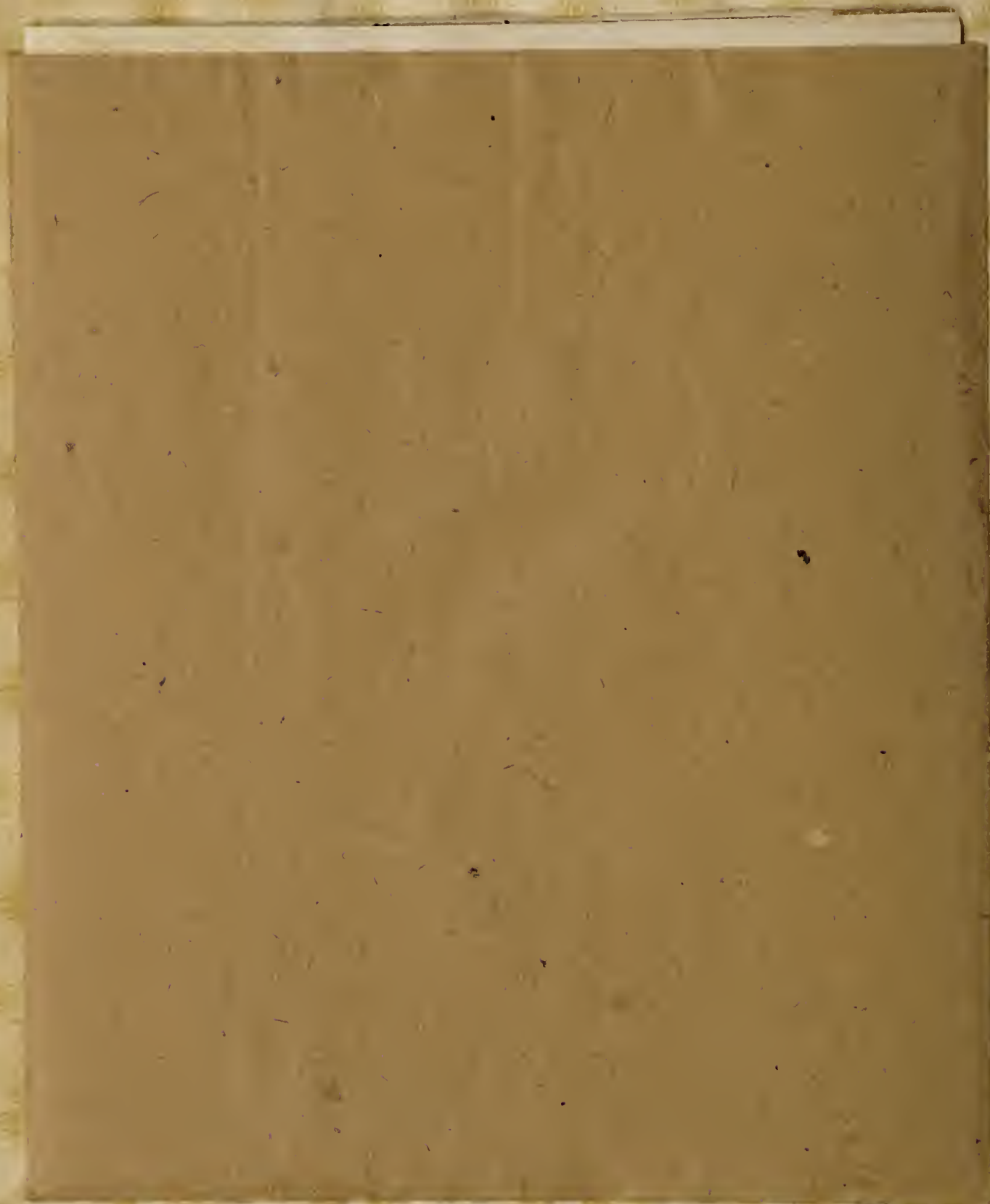
MacKinnlay's edition of
"Mendax" is simply the American
edition reprinted in Halifax from
plates sent from Philadelphia ^{with a different title-page.}

Only about 100 copies were
so printed, to secure the Canadian
copyright, which was acquired
of course in my name, the Philadelphia
publishers trusting to my good faith.

They intended, I believe, only to
sell their Philadelphia edition in
Canada; but, so far as I know,
they made no efforts to push the
Canadian circulation, beyond
sending about 1/2 a dozen copies
for review — one to the Dominion

Illustrator. The Halifax ed. was a month
later than the Philadelphia ed., which accounts
for the press notices published in enclosed advt.

16/11/24
NV



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